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THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR

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Illusions of American Foreign Policy

ASHER B. LANS

THERE IS A CHINESE PROVERB which describes the diplomacy of the United States in unflattering terms: "A loud noise is heard coming down the steps, but no one descends." We have a national penchant for enunciation of broad, idealistic goals which, conceived in unreality, are disregarded in the improvisation which characterizes the actual conduct of American foreign relations.

To some extent, this ambivalence of statesmanship reflects an uneasy compromise between the residual isolationism and the disembodied international idealism which pervade American public opinion. They are equally indicative of a diplomacy which is largely opportunistic, which has failed to analyze (or is unwilling to enunciate) the interests of the United States and the nature of the dynamic factors making for international change, and which often has been unwilling to exercise the responsibility of creative leadership.

I do not wish to imply that our foreign policy has been uniformly unsuccessful. To borrow the familiar military analogy, our tactics have usually been adroit and often successful; our strategic plans, however, have either been unrealistic or nonexistent. Our diplomatic victories, therefore, have chiefly been short run; and our significant triumphs have usually been achieved through force of arms or extravagant "aid" programs. Our shortcomings are best illustrated by the contrary guide to policy set forth by one of the

✪ ASHER B. LANS is an attorney. He has represented a number of private organizations interested in international affairs, taught in the municipal colleges of New York City, and written several articles on legal aspects of foreign relations.

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more successful diplomats of our times, Joseph Stalin: "We cannot move forward without knowing where it is necessary to go. . . . We cannot build without perspectives. . . . We must not base our orientation on the strata of society which are no longer developing . . . but on those strata which are developing and have a future before them, even though they at present do not constitute the predominant force." Neither Stalin's perspectives nor aims are or should be those of the United States; we cannot, however, afford to ignore his insistence on the necessity for long-run programs or for discerning and meeting the factors making for instability and change in the world situation.

In a democracy, the inarticulate major premises of public opinion affect the devisal and continuance of an effective international strategy. The purpose of this article is to discuss certain common illusions which, it is submitted, have vitiated the foreign policy of the United States.

The Permanence of the Cold War

Inevitably the major diplomatic effort of the next decade will be the attempt to achieve a long-run political settlement with the Soviet Union. The new politeness at international conferences, the exchange visits by agricultural experts, the enthusiastic reception given to American chess masters and weight lifters will be increasingly characterized as the harbingers of a drastic modification of Kremlin policy. The pleasing concept that the cold war can be ended through patient negotiation is receiving increasing support.

This analysis is rooted in a failure to appreciate three factors. First, it indicates an inability by many of our "conservative" political personalities, who have no strong ideas of their own and who are skeptical of the influence of ideas, to appreciate the dominating effect of ideology on Communist leaders. We are repeating the mistake of Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain who disbelieved the plain testimony of *Mein Kampf* and preferred to assume that Hitler was the same sort of "practical" politician they were.

Unlike any other current political organization, Soviet Russia claims to be the repository of a universal gospel. It asserts that its

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existence is inevitably challenged by every nation and group which disbelieves this creed, and that its survival therefore depends upon the conversion, by education or conquest, of all heretics. Therefore, Soviet conduct cannot be appraised or predicted by the ordinary standards of power politics, but must be evaluated, at least in part, as a species of religious fanaticism like that which motivated the leaders of the Mohammedan world during the seventh and eighth centuries. It is, of course, true that the rulers of Russia, as evidenced by their day-to-day tactics, are basically amoral; when temporarily expedient, they will enter into arrangements with their greatest ideological opponents such as Hitler and Perón. At the same time, the Kremlin is always concerned with its long-run strategy; if it takes one step backward today, such retrogression is intended only to facilitate the two steps forward it hopes to take tomorrow.

To follow Nathan Leites, the operational code of the Politburo can best be discerned by ignoring the writings of the democratic, utopian Marx and relying on the principles set forth by Lenin and Stalin in party discussions. This code, in essence, proclaims an inevitable pressure by Russia for global dominion, camouflaged by tactical retreats, transient accommodations and periods of inactivity. Thus, simultaneously with the initiation of the "moderate" New Economic Policy in 1921, Lenin said: "Either the White Guard bourgeois terror of the American, British, Italian . . . and other types, or Red proletarian terror. There is no middle course, no 'third' course, nor can there be. . . . Until the final issue [between capitalism and communism] is decided the state of partial war will continue." ". . . the aim is radically to transform the conditions of life of the whole of humanity. . . . We are prepared . . . to make a thousand attempts; having made a thousand attempts we shall go on to the next attempt. . . ." "We shall be called upon to make very frequent changes in our line of conduct which to the casual observer may seem strange and incomprehensible." In 1925 Stalin repeated the Trojan horse doctrine: "We must utilize the period of quiet for . . . rendering the party 'always ready' for all possibilities of 'complications.' For 'unknown is the day and the hour' when 'the bridegroom cometh,' opening the way to a new revolutionary surge." Even the so-called "internationalist" Litvinov declared that

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"it was necessary to face the fact that there was not one world, but two, a Soviet world and a non-Soviet world."

The second common mistake, it seems to me, is the assumption that, like the United States, England and France, Russia, by virtue of its past conquests, has become a "satiated" or "have" power and therefore will strive to maintain the status quo. The comparison seems to me false. As Professor Seton-Watson has pointed out, the economic and social pattern of the Soviet Union is basically akin to that of Western Europe and the United States early in the nineteenth century. The whole internal pressure of the dominant economic group in Russia, i.e., the state machine, is to increase production of capital goods, without regard for an increase in the standards of living and without effective challenge. Moreover, says Seton-Watson, "the attitude of the Soviet rulers to the non-Russian nationalities is also similar to that of our Victorian grandparents. The arguments with which Soviet historians explain to Kirghiz or Tatars how lucky they were to be conquered by the Czars are the Marxist-Leninist equivalents of Kipling."

Russia is the last unrestrained white, imperialist nation. Since the end of the seventeenth century and with only temporary setbacks, it has expanded eastward across Asia to the Pacific, westward along the Baltic and into Poland, and south along the Black Sea. Consistent with their professed anti-imperialist beliefs, the Soviet rulers at first acted as if they would break up their own empire, as by their consent to the secession of Latvia and Estonia. This utopian phase survived only until Lenin had consolidated his rule. Beginning in 1921, with the reconquest of Georgia and Armenia, the Soviets have in practice emulated and surpassed the Czarist policies of repressing the nationalist desires of their own minorities and of expanding their own borders at all opportunities. Thus, in 1919, the Soviet government voluntarily surrendered its extraterritorial control of the vital Chinese ports of Dairen and Port Arthur; it regained its suzerainty over the areas in 1945 and has refused to yield its rights even to the Mao regime.

While the British, French and Dutch colonial empires have atrophied since at least 1945, Russian imperialism has continued to expand. Several factors help explain this difference. The Western states expanded by seizing overseas territories. Russia occupied

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adjacent areas; this heartland, because of its geographical contiguity, was easier to rule, and Russia was able to describe it as an *Anschluss* of related peoples rather than as simple conquest. With an unparalleled display of Orwellian "double talk," the Soviet Union has utilized its Marxist heritage and its specious policy of linguistic freedom to become the most vocal European opponent of "colonialism," while maintaining an iron hand over its own slave empire. Not being inhibited by public opinion or liberalism, the Russians have eradicated nascent rebelliousness with a consistent savagery no other state would dare employ.

Third, even if the Russians now wished to act like a satiated power, it is dubious that they could control their allies in the Far East. Mao and Ho Chi-minh are flushed with victory and are patently engaged in efforts to expand their spheres of control. The Communist state machines in Asia (and to a lesser degree in Russia) are in expansionist moods, not likely to be voluntarily curbed, except after military defeat or as a result of the slow acquisition of internal power by bureaucratic groups, not inflamed by their professed ideologies and with a vested interest in maintenance of the status quo.

After 1930, the patient and subtle Stalin successfully created the impression that Russia had abandoned the propagation of world revolution and had receded to Russian nationalism. The millennial dream of a series of quick, independent revolutions by the working classes of the various states was succeeded by the growth in power and territory of the Russian superstate. Imperialism superseded utopianism in the Kremlin's foreign policy albeit not in its rhetoric. In the process, the vocabulary of international politics was moderated, and patient infusion replaced the attempt at rapid conquest. The iron hand secreted in the glove of the popular front was clearly revealed, however, by the ruthlessness with which leaders of the underground government of the presumed ally, Poland, were extirpated upon the "liberation" of their country. It is only reasonable to assume that Khrushchev and Bulganin are seeking to utilize the same devious policy. A balance of power has been attained in Europe which, short of global war, makes further immediate Communist expansion unlikely. Therefore, gestures of conciliation are initiated, with the aim of inducing or forcing

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American withdrawal from Europe. It is further hoped that American economic aid and intervention in East Asia will be abated, because of domestic political pressures, thus permitting the Communists to continue with infiltration of the weak new governments.

This analysis does not impel the conclusion that we should not negotiate with the Russians to abate specific tensions. It suggests that we should act on the assumption that arrangements with the Kremlin are simply momentary balances of power, and not a long-run settlement. The durability of such accommodations, without appeasement and further losses, is dependent upon our maintaining our military strength and our ability to compete successfully with the Russians for the uncommitted rulers and masses of Asia. If a unilateral state of euphoria and national indolence like that which followed the Japanese surrender is induced, then the disarmed West will suffer defeats greater than the loss of Poland and Czechoslovakia, resulting not from war but from an imbalance of force in favor of the Soviets.

There is an equally dangerous delusion concerning Russia and China which is prevalent only in the United States. I refer to the theory that, because of productive limitations and the presumed superiority of our air force, neither Russia nor China is able to sustain a major war. However, gross productive capacity is not the only criterion of military strength. Dictatorships have always been able to devote an enormously greater portion of their industrial output to the maintenance of their war machines than have democracies. In addition, neither the Russian nor Chinese armies (although the former certainly has highly modern equipment) is dependent on mechanized transport or modern living conditions to the extent that American forces are. Like Sherman's army marching through Georgia, Communist troops live on and off the countryside.

We have too soon forgotten that in 1941, when the Nazis attacked Russia, substantially all military experts predicted that the Red Army would be totally defeated within six weeks. In the ensuing conflict, as in the Napoleonic invasion, the capacity of the Russians to overcome enormous initial defeats and attrition of manpower and material was clearly demonstrated. It would be fatuous to assume that the Russians now have less staying power.

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The Delusion that the United Nations or a World State Will Maintain the Peace

For fifty years the diplomacy of the United States has cherished the assumption that peace could be maintained by negotiation of appropriate treaties to abjure war, such as the Kellogg Pact of 1927, and, more recently, by the formation of organizations of nations.

Thus, many official apologists for President Roosevelt's foreign policy have stated that the Second World War would have been averted had the United States joined the League of Nations. This argument assumes that the rearmament of Germany after 1933, the renunciation of the Versailles Treaty, the reoccupation of the Rhineland, et cetera, all could and would have been blocked had the United States been a member of the League. The trouble with this contention is that England and France were themselves in a military position from 1933 through 1937 to prevent the remilitarization of Germany had they chosen to do so, and this was the case regardless of the position adopted by the United States. Had the United States elected to take a strong position, there is no reason to assume that its lead would have been followed. Indeed, in 1931 when Secretary of State Stimson sought to align the West European states with the United States to thwart the Japanese conquest of Manchuria, his efforts were totally unsuccessful.

The assumption that the recognized sovereign states of the world can, by majority decision, determine important political questions and resolve major international conflicts is both undemocratic and unrealistic. It would be possible to organize a majority of the members of the United Nations, whose populations aggregate about 8 per cent of the world. A decision thus arrived at would be an unparalleled example of international gerrymandering, but it would hardly be democratic and could hardly be enforced.

Nor would the United Nations or any similar international organization be more successful if its balloting were conducted on the basis of relative populations, rather than on the present concept of the juridical equality of all sovereign states. More than half of the world's population is Asiatic, and it is quite clear that the United States, rightly or wrongly, would not permit its policy to

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be determined by such a majority. From the American standpoint, the issue is not that of the type of international majority but of our own unwillingness to have our basic policies subjected to outside determination or veto. For example, does anyone believe that the United States would permit its right to occupy the Panama Canal Zone to be passed upon by majority vote of the nations of the World or even of the Americas? The history of the Yalta Conference clearly shows that the existence of a veto power in the United Nations resulted as much from our insistence as from Stalin's.

The argument that an international organization can maintain the peace further ignores the fact that power is the indispensable basis of any government. As E. H. Carr has stated:

> To internationalise government in any real sense means to internationalise power; and since independent power is the basis of the nation-state, the internationalisation of power is really a contradiction in terms. International government is, in effect, government by that state which supplies the power necessary for the purpose of governing.

The argument that international organizations can maintain the peace is further hinged upon the premise that there is a fundamental harmony of interests among states with the result that disputes can be resolved over a conference table. The fact that the United States, England and France were the principal proponents during the 1930's of the thesis that all disputes could be settled by peaceful means largely reflected the fact that, so long as peace was maintained, no change distasteful to them could be made in the status quo and they could retain the fruits of their past aggressions. We have been overpropagandized with the devil theory of war. Like most law suits, conflicts between nations usually reflect legitimate disputes over issues where "justice" and "equity" exist for both sides. The art of international politics therefore is the art of making compromises, within the limits of fundamental state interest.

It is, of course, true that peaceful change is a highly desirable objective. However, as John Strachey has pointed out, "while governments always tell us they will never yield to force; all history tells us . . . that they never yield to anything else."

Organizations such as the United Nations have a very vital function in the diplomatic sphere. That function is to provide a con-

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venient meeting place for intercourse among states and to afford the representatives of the smaller nations an opportunity to mediate. If we seek to make the United Nations some sort of international government, we will have to give it direct control over military forces. Even if the United States would agree, the inevitable result would be the withdrawal of Russia and its satellites and later of the neutrals, the creation of a second (and therefore unnecessary) NATO, and the destruction of the most useful means of discussion with the Communist nations. The world would be more effectively sundered into closed blocs.

Disarmament

The Geneva Conference "at the Summit" revealed the astonishing durability of the American dream that peace can be promoted by disarmament. This conviction, stemming from the American distrust of generals and admirals and from our idealistic religious strain, is further buttressed by the desire of so-called conservatives to secure budget economies. It seems plausible to say that men who habitually handle guns eventually want to use them. However, the evidence of recent history is that the major wars have not been initiated by professional soldiers but by political leaders.

The fundamental difficulty with a disarmament program, of course, is the probability that it will not be carried out by the Communist nations. As President Eisenhower recently pointed out: there is no inspection system which is even 50 per cent efficient, and this is particularly true when armaments take the form of easily camouflaged and quantitatively small bacteriological or nuclear material. In addition, as the experience of Germany during the Weimar Republic showed, it is not difficult to camouflage troop formations as internal police, customs guards, and the like.

Even if a disarmament treaty were faithfully carried out at its inception, the democratic states would always be at a disadvantage if a revival of militarization took place at a later date. The reason for this is that a totalitarian government, which does not make its budgetary figures public and is not subject to inquiry by a zealous and independent press, could, having initially purported to disarm, thereafter carry out a substantial program of surreptitious rearming with little prospect of discovery. In addition, the very machinery

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of a parliamentary government would make rearmament a tedious and slow process in the Western democracies.

No less dangerous than a general disarmament campaign is the concept that there should be a preliminary dismantling of atomic weapons. Atom bombs are no more invidious than certain other modern munitions. The unique Russian pressure for the abolition of nuclear weapons is based upon their belief that they are superior to the United States, at least quantitatively, insofar as conventional armaments and manpower are concerned, and inferior in the atomic field. (The Russians, of course, are also trying to capitalize on the widespread horror of atomic warfare.)

All nations tend to euphemize as defensive the weapons in which they predominate and to describe as offensive those in which their opponents are strongest. Thus, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the British freely granted letters of marque and reprisal to enterprising sea captains; by 1856 when England's navy had become the world's greatest, Queen Victoria thought that privateering was "piracy." At the Versailles Conference in 1919, the United States and England, the two greatest naval powers, thought that "civilization demands" the submarine be abolished; to the less affluent French, Italian and Japanese, the submarine was a convenient and justifiable weapon. The Russians have always been astute at developing guilt feelings among liberals to inhibit political conduct. Thus, they precluded criticisms of their mass deportations and slave labor system by pointing to our occasional lynchings. We must be on guard not to be induced by similar synthetic guilt feelings to give away our atomic superiority, while we permit the Russians to maintain their supremacy in other forms of armament.

Fundamentally, the freedom of the Western world is based upon our power to defend ourselves and to inflict injury upon any attacker. The carving up of China in the last century is only one example of what inevitably happens to a nation which, impressed with its own moral superiority, neglects its military strength. The enormous territorial gains made by the Communists in Eastern Europe during and after 1945 resulted not from any alleged diplomatic betrayals at Yalta or elsewhere, but from the superiority of Russian strength, partly caused by over-quick demobilization of

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the American and British armies. As Mr. Neville Chamberlain belatedly discovered in June of 1939, "in the world as we find it today an unarmed nation has little chance of making its voice heard," or, for that matter, has little chance of maintaining its independence.

The Balance of Power Theory

Many sophisticated professional diplomats argue that international peace can be maintained only by the preservation of a so-called balance of power. This theory's modern reincarnation stems from the experience of the Italian city states in the late Renaissance. As revitalized by England's statesmen, particularly Lord Bolingbroke and Robert Walpole in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, it was aimed at preventing Western Europe from coming under the domination of a single state. In pursuance of this principle, England, at various times between approximately 1670 and 1939, helped form alliances to prevent the domination of Europe by France, by Austria and later by Germany.

The instability of balance of power politics inheres in the fact that relative military strength tends to shift from time to time. Hence, in a balance of power system, one group of states starts wars to prevent its enemies from becoming more powerful.

In the eighteenth century, the high point of the theory, the major states of Europe were at war more than 50 per cent of the time. The Crimean War of 1857 was fought by Great Britain and France not to obtain any immediate objective, but to prevent Czarist Russia from becoming strong enough to jeopardize their Levantine interests at a later date. It is highly probable that the major European states, other than Austria, were sucked into the vortex of the First World War out of a desire to prevent other states from increasing their strength.

The second difficulty with balance of power politics is that it makes the resolution of conflict between nations entirely military and prevents concentration of effort upon the amelioration of economic and nationalistic grievances. Except after a war which ends by the exhaustion of all participants (for example, the Thirty Years' War in the seventeenth century), peace treaties traditionally have shifted the balance of power and have created substantial

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ethnic grievances. They have forced the creation of a new system of alliances to redress the old unbalance. Thus it was England's conviction that France had become too powerful after 1919 which impelled its leaders to acquiesce in German rearmament. The total demolition of Germany and Japan in 1945 helped create the power vacuums into which the Russians and the Chinese Communists spread. Any balance of power system, therefore, has an inherent tendency to create conflict and to make some of the satisfied "have" nations of one decade, the restless "have not," would-be aggressors of the next.

The Concept that East Asia Can Be Converted into an Anti-Russian and Anti-Chinese Bastion

It is an irreversible fact of contemporary American existence that our national future is interwoven with the course of events in East Asia. It is unfortunately true that in the ten years since the end of the Second World War, the United States has dissipated the generalized good will which it previously had built up in the East, has become typed as the worst of all imperialist powers, and has suffered a series of substantial diplomatic and propaganda defeats. In large measure this has resulted from our concentration of diplomatic attention and economic aid in Europe and from our attempt to create in East Asia an organization or grouping of powers similar to NATO. Our failure and our present situation in Asia may be summarized under several headings:

1. *White Supremacy*: As Arnold Toynbee has pointed out, when Westerners called the citizens of Asia "natives," they treated them "as trees walking, or as wild animals infesting the country . . . as part of the local flora and fauna and not as men of like passions." The inferior positions imposed upon the Asians in their own countries during the period of imperialist rule created an understandable resentment of the white overlord, particularly when the latter treated as pagan and primitive the age-old local cultures and religions. Social snobbery and prejudice were magnified into great importance. Such feelings are not dissipated by the mere attainment of national independence any more than the Anglophobia of many Irishmen was ended or abated by the creation of an independent Eire. Under such circumstances, it was and

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is almost impossible for any Asiatic state to commit wrong in its dealings with white nations insofar as the public opinion in the rest of Asia is concerned. While logically they could see that Red China was the aggressor in Korea, peoples in India, Burma and Indonesia had a lingering emotional sympathy for the Chinese because they were fellow Asians standing up to whites and, therefore, compensating for decades of humiliation.

Unfortunately, the United States has, because of the facts and Communist propaganda about the treatment of Negroes in the South, and because of the "Gook" mentality, become characterized throughout Asia as a state which preaches equality and practices discrimination. Hence, the Supreme Court's decision abolishing racial segregation in schools is the strongest weapon our diplomacy has yet had. We must make continued efforts to overcome the stigma of prejudice, as for example, by utilizing wherever possible Negro personnel in our economic, medical and military aid missions. The anti-white feelings among the ruling elite of Asia can be overcome only by freer social intermingling. In the last analysis, however, our salvation will only come if we actually free ourselves of color prejudice and are able to revert to the spirit in which the medieval artists used to portray one of the three Magi as a Negro.

2. *The Support of Asian Nationalism*: Communist power in the Far East necessarily entails dominion by the Chinese. Hence, the strongest opponent to the spread of communism is the nascent nationalism of the peoples of Burma and Indonesia, Thailand and Indochina.

The history of the last ten years shows that the Communists have succeeded in the Far East only when the local state machines broke down almost completely, as in China after 1945, or when the Reds were able to identify themselves with local nationalists in opposition to outside imperialist rulers, as in Vietnam. When the former imperialist Western states abdicated their power with relative grace and assisted in the creation of new governmental machinery, as in Burma and Indonesia, they created governments which, despite their weaknesses, desired to and did successfully oppose Communist rebellions. Nehru's self-professed neutralist government has repressed the domestic Communists of India with great severity. Even Ho Chi-minh sought in 1946 to develop a *modus vivendi*

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with France, but was rebuffed and thrown into the arms of the extremists.

It is a mistake to assume that the neutralism which has distinguished the foreign policy of the new nations of the East is a sign of pro-Communist sympathies. Like the peasant masses, the ruling elite is necessarily occupied with the problems of organizing their governments, increasing their economic potential and of raising standards of living. They are simply trying to stay out of conflicts between the great powers and to maintain peace so that their own countries may develop unimpeded. They know that the pressure of war may be too much for their inexperienced state machines to bear and that an internal Communist revolution would probably follow. The attitude of Nehru, Nu and Soekarno is necessarily very much like that which the leaders of the United States held immediately after the American Revolution. As the Swedish ambassador told John Adams in 1784: "I take it for granted that you will have sense enough to see us in Europe at each other's throats with philosophical tranquillity."

While Southeast Asia is not tranquil about the prospects of a Russian-American conflict, its basic desire is to stay uninvolved. Democracy, however, is a mansion which has many rooms. We can afford to have the Asiatic states remain uncommitted providing they build their own economic and educational defenses and maintain relatively free governments. For under such circumstances, the nations of Asia will remain domestically anti-Communist, will create conditions in which their own peoples have a stake in the preservation of their independence, and thus will be, at worst, our tacit allies. The contrary policy of enforcing diplomatic anti-communism in Southeast Asia will permit the Chinese and Russians successfully to assert that we are again acting as imperialist overlords and will ally communism to nationalism in an undefeatable union.

3. *The Short, Happy Road to Industrialization*: It has become conventional to assert that the rapid increase in the industrial and agricultural productivity of Asia is indispensable to avert internal Communist revolutions and that such increase can relatively easily be affected through large-scale American economic assistance, modeled on the Marshall Plan.

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While the objective is necessary, the suggested solution seems to me to be based on gross oversimplification. At least, insofar as Southeast Asia is concerned there is a prevalent reluctance to accept extensive American loans or grants in aid. To a considerable extent this is based upon an unwillingness to accept the political commitments which it is felt would be a necessary concomitant of large-scale economic assistance. Additionally, in countries which have only recently rid themselves of foreign rulers, there is an understandable antipathy toward the reception of significant amounts of American capital. This attitude is re-enforced by the socialist and semi-socialist backgrounds of many of the leading personalities in India, Indonesia and Burma, which induce the belief that political interference would inevitably follow heavy investments. Southeast Asia will not tolerate an era of dollar diplomacy such as existed in Latin America in the early 1900's.

Even stronger objection is made to the introduction of substantial amounts of private foreign capital. The new nations simply do not wish a large portion of their important industries to be owned by foreigners, and this objection would persist whether or not the absentee landlords pursued progressive policies. In addition, private foreign investment in underdeveloped countries has usually been concentrated in industries capable of producing goods for export. Such foreign-owned enterprises, of course, contributed valuable tax payments and made foreign exchange available. However, this type of investment did relatively little to increase the standards of living in the countries in which it was made.

Whether we like it or not, the governments of Asia intend to keep their key industries in their own hands and to control their own pattern of industrialization. Because of their capital shortages, this necessarily means the adoption of a policy of state socialism. Such programs have been promulgated even by so conservative a government as that of Turkey.

There is no method by which substantial amounts of capital can be aggregated in backward countries except by the coercive utilization of the tax and fiscal powers of the state. Initially, except in countries such as Burma which have substantial export surpluses, such accumulation of capital will entail heavy taxation of farmers so as to drain off surplus produce for investment in industralization.

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This is precisely the policy which was adopted in Japan subsequent to 1870. (An important secondary source of funds with which to finance capital expansion is the imposition of exchange controls to prevent diversion of badly needed foreign currencies by the wealthy native landlord and mercantile classes into luxury consumption purchases.)

The economic modernization of Southeast Asia entails, as a necessary pre-condition, substantial investments in highway and railroad construction, erection of power plants, development of a technical educational system, and other projects which will neither increase export capacity nor decrease import needs in the immediate future with any reasonable relation to their costs. In addition, such projects involve heavy capital expenditures and will not necessarily be income-producing. Moreover, rapid industrialization in an underdeveloped area can best be effected if conducted pursuant to an over-all plan. Where capital is short, it must be rationed intelligently, in the same way as gasoline and sugar were rationed in wartime. These tasks cannot be carried out except by the local governments, and any local government which undertook to operate under foreign direction would be treated by its own people as an imperialist lackey and would commit political suicide.

Equally complex is the agricultural dilemma which confronts most Asian governments. Since 1945 it has been a difficult task to increase food supply commensurate with the unprecedented increase in population. Hungry men know only one politics—that of obtaining food. This is the prime task of the Asian democracies.

At the same time, Communist agitators have everywhere, prior to their accession to power, sought rural support by promising to divide all large estates and to give each farmer his own plot of land. It is politically imperative that the free governments in Asia actually pursue the policy which the Communists have promised. However, disintegration of large farming units may well have the effect of reducing agricultural production. It will therefore be necessary to develop voluntary agricultural co-operatives, with communely owned equipment, and to introduce more efficient farming methods and techniques in order to increase food supply.

Manifestly, large-scale industrial and agricultural reforms and increases of production can best be carried out if substantial as-

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sistance is provided from the more developed countries. (Otherwise industrialization and an increase in national power may take place without an improvement of living standards, a prospective development likely to have chaotic consequences.) Such assistance will require large financial grants. Equally, it will require that technical and managerial aids of all kinds be provided. Asia needs know-how as much as additional capital. It is indispensable, however, that this assistance be supplied in such a manner that it cannot be readily labeled as neo-imperialism. It would appear, therefore, that both financial and technical aid should be channeled, not through American controlled instrumentalities such as the Point IV Agency, but through the United Nations and organizations like the Colombo Conference in which the Asian governments are full, participating partners. It will be highly desirable that international capital investment be made jointly with local capital, whether governmental or private. New forms of business enterprise will have to be developed in which foreign and local private capital, and foreign and local governments participate, with local control maintained. At the same time, methods will have to be devised to furnish technical assistance without aggravating national inferiority complexes. The tasks thus posed are difficult, but the importance of their solution justifies every effort.

One final comment is necessary. Since 1945, the politics of Asia have been dominated by organized groups in the large cities, even though the urban population is an insignificant minority. Since then, the Southeast Asian governments have been comprised of the self-designated leaders of the former revolutionary movements. Except in India, national elections have not been held. Sooner or later, however, the voice of the villagers and of the peasants will become predominant; sooner or later a new generation of leaders will emerge which, unlike the present elite, was not educated under European systems. It is therefore necessary that every effort be made both to promote the conquest of rural illiteracy and to make the voice of America heard in the Asian villages. Among other things, this will require the development and patient labors of large numbers of rural experts who will live in the villages as equals and not superiors.

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The Rebirth of Idealism

An ultimate handicap of recent American diplomacy (particularly in Socialist Asia) is that we have appeared on the world stage as the close collaborator of reactionaries such as Franco, Chiang Kai-shek, and the pro-Nazi successors of Mossadegh. Like our wartime recognition of Vichy France, this policy has considerable pragmatic justification. However, we have neglected to indicate that the choice of allies was based purely on expediency, and we have abandoned that consistent support of democratic leaders which enhanced our moral position in earlier years.

We have waged our campaign almost exclusively with soldiers and with money, and we have permitted the Communists to usurp the appeal to the idealistic and equalitarian instincts of humanity. The educated Asian leaders, in particular, have developed the concept that we are a nation of soft-drink consumers and apple-pie eaters, who read comic books or detective stories, and have relatively little interest in broader intellectual questions.

A viable foreign policy cannot be based primarily on guns, dollars, anti-communism and the preachment of an American way of life which is not understood and for generations will serve in most of the world only as a focus for envy. We have enlisted janizaries on our side and have secured allies; we have singularly failed to develop enthusiastic supporters. National self-determination, the equality of races, the right of the ordinary man to live a peaceful life, the liberty of the person—all are principles deeply rooted in our national history and cherished in our political and religious testaments. These are the ideals which, when elementary needs for bread and rice have been met, will stir the souls of men everywhere.

During the entire century and a half between the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the enunciation of the Fourteen Points, the United States was identified everywhere as the foe of colonialism, and the friend of democracy and the little man. It is high time that our statesmen revived this national tradition, for international leadership can be maintained only by a diplomacy which weds constructive realism to enduring ideals.

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The Kinds of Knowledge

MARK VAN DOREN

WHEN A GREAT UNIVERSITY, in the name of that knowledge to which it believes all men as men have right, reviews its own career of learning and of teaching, it is bound to ask itself what knowledge really is, and how much of it exists at present or can be imagined as existing in some day to come. Such a university, putting such a question to itself, will be expected to make a modest answer, for in no other place should the limits of the human mind be better known; but it is not required to deny that knowledge exists at all, or to suggest, if knowledge be supposed to exist in several kinds, that these are like the kinds of snakes in Ireland: varieties of nothing in the end.

The university has faith in knowledge. Or to put the case more accurately, it has faith in the possibility of knowledge. The possibility is what matters, plus a method, or a set of methods, whereby the actuality may in ever higher and higher degree be encouraged to exist. Those to whom the problem is not real assume the actuality already to exist; somewhere, somehow, someone knows everything. But to others it is a familiar fact that the true scholar is more interested in what he may know tomorrow than in what he knows today, and is more likely to want to talk about it. The modesty of the true scholar is neither a gesture nor a joke. To him it is quite literally the case that a science of anything presupposes a vast ignorance concerning it: an ignorance, indeed, so vast that even its very nature may never be understood. He as a scientist, in other words, may never become clear as to what it is of which he is ignorant, or ought to consider himself ignorant; he may never learn just what it is that he should seek to know. Meanwhile, how-

✪ This article by MARK VAN DOREN, professor of English at Columbia University, was originally presented as an address at the First Bicentennial Convocation of Columbia University.

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ever, he has his method; he does know how to proceed within the field of ignorance he has managed to define. And that one field is vast enough; nor will all of it, perhaps, be ever conquered. So he is always busy, with scarcely the time to pause and tell us, should we ask, how much he knows; and more particularly, how much of what he knows.

To the extent that he is a true scholar he will contemplate this question of the what, and seriously ask it of himself. Is he studying the right thing?—which means, for true scholars, the most difficult, the most hidden, the most abstract, the most inaccessible thing. Has he been content thus far with fields of ignorance that others have defined? Has he discovered any for himself? And if he has, is it the farthest field, beyond whose fences, conceivably, the simple truth sits looking at itself? Often this farthest field seems nearest to the uninitiated mind, which asks elementary questions about it: What is it, after all? Why are you studying it? What would it mean to know what you say you want to know? Is it important? What difference will it make? Or, in a more friendly voice, even an eager one: What is electricity? What is life? What is poetry? Can history be true, and if so, what history is most true? Is there such a thing as human nature, and does it grow? What is government? What is law? What is money? What are the stars, and why is there so much space between them? Where is God? And if man knew everything, would he be God?

The truest scholar will be the most tolerant of such questions, for they are like the ones he asks himself when he is simple and serious; and if he is never simple and serious, he is a pedant or a quack, and the long face he wears as he discourses of his method is a sign that he does not know why he has it, or what he will do with the results of it when he gets them. Universities have their share of persons who practice learning without a divine license, who do not know what is important unless someone else tells them, who work in fields of ignorance from which for them there is no escape, who labor in the dark to raise ever higher and higher the heap of little fragments which in their boastful moments they call the "sum of human knowledge."

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But what is the sum of human knowledge? Or what would it be if it ever were complete? And is it necessarily a future thing, something to be hoped for only, something impossible now? Can one be certain that it does not already exist? If it needs to be the equivalent of God's knowledge, certainly it does not exist; for men are neither more nor less divine than they originally were. But doubtless there is no such need. Men may know merely what men can know. And according to one view they have always known it. Jonathan Swift thought men knew it in his time, two centuries and more ago. But most of them, he concluded, were not aware that they knew it, and so had got lost in mazes of speculation and experiment for which there was no earthly use—nor divine either, since God does not find it necessary to be a scientist, a philosopher, or a theologian. These are human terms, less admirable for Swift than the monosyllable "man." Most men in any time, he said, know all that can be known about how to live and how not to live; it is only sickness, or corruption, or perversity that cuts them off from life itself, which everywhere is simple and makes no mystery of its rules. Liars are liars in any world; and so are hypocrites and thieves, and lazy people; and so are the lovely people—the kind, the just, the generous, the temperate, the courageous, the wise, the strong.

There is validity in such a view. Men's thoughts about themselves are different from one decade to the next, but their virtues and their vices do not seem to change. The very man who tries to prove that there is no longer any distinction between good and bad—that these are words, not things—will in his next breath denounce a neighbor of whose conduct he disapproves. The very man who swears that it is old-fashioned to speak of truth may find himself, before the day is over, calling some other man a falsifier. Most of us, it may be, know more than we admit; we know, as Swift said, how to live; at least we keep on living, as our great-grandfathers did. And this regardless of whether or not we have access to the kinds of knowledge with which universities are concerned.

And properly concerned. For the possibilities of knowledge which haunt and inspire scholars are themselves among the things that

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prove man human. Not animal, certainly, since animals know perfectly how they should live in order to survive and to repeat themselves. Not godlike, just as certainly, for the possibilities can never be more than possibilities. And if Swift for all his genius could despise them, so we too may remember how they limit us; we too may learn from him and them how not to be too proud.

Yet they are half the truth about mankind. To be a scholar is not to be an unnatural thing. The nature of man is to want more knowledge than he will ever possess; and to work for it as if it still might be possessed. And if in his universities he gives that knowledge a variety of names, if he recognizes it in more than a single form, he does not in so doing deny that the many may be one, or might be if a proper view of them could be obtained. Perhaps in our day he tries less hard than once he did to master the perspectives that would be involved in such a complete and distant view of himself in the act of contemplation. His nature does not, it would seem, permit him to do this; yet he has made the attempt, and he will make it again. At the moment, however, he looks as if he lacked the ambition, not to say the curiosity. We do not hear him asking what it is, if it is anything, that the poet and the mathematician know together, or the historian and the chemist, or the musician and the doctor, or the moral philosopher and the atomic physicist. The sum of human knowledge, were it attainable and statable, might be a single sentence, a single word; or it might be only so clear a view of everything that sound was supererogatory, and speech an impertinence. Granted that the sum is inaccessible, man still may speculate as to its parts, and as to the niceties of their relation. Contemporary man, at least in universities, refuses to do so. He lets the study of literature be altogether different from the study of bacteria and the stars. If some resemblance actually is there, he does not know of it because he has never inquired. He assumes a perfect absence of relation; and so if he is a student of poetry he is content with total ignorance of energy, proportion and equation, though poetry is built of just those things; and if he is a natural scientist he does not stop to wonder whether it is more than a coincidence that art must be natural too, or must seem so if it

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would exert its utmost force; nor does he ask that force to confess any resemblance it may bear to gravity and whirlwinds, to natural selection and a mushroom cloud.

But even if he did this, and even if the poet were better educated than he is, the answer would never come, we may be sure, in the form of one apocalyptic word. The knowledge of such a word which the theologian has is another kind of knowledge, unsupported by what is ordinarily called evidence, either in universities or in the outer world; but especially in universities, whose scholars are experts in evidence, and grow wary at once if told that something is true although it never can be proved. Yet revelation belongs in their lives too, as it belongs in the career of every healthy intellect, no matter what the training it has had, and whether this be great or small. Any man knows things he has not been told; the good teacher gives forth more than he was taught; sometimes the truth comes easily, as if it said itself. And this can be the case whatever the theory of knowledge one professes—Swift's or that of the most methodical scholar. The knowledge that advances, like the knowledge that stands still, is studded with discoveries which cannot be traced to any source. It is vanity to deny this, and folly to underrate it. Nor is it the same thing as that apocalyptic word which is never to be spoken. It used to be understood that the knowledge of angels came with less difficulty than that of man. It came instantaneously, whereas for men it was the labor of a lifetime to learn the little that they knew. Men still are less than the angels, and what they know is of a lower order; yet any man, on any occasion, may be more wise than he is able to explain. The name for this is "brilliance": a sudden light that no one has turned on. And it can come on anywhere: in the laboratory, the recitation hall, the midnight study; in the field, the street, the noisy or the quiet room; in sleep, or at the hour of waking, or halfway through an otherwise eventless day. It too is knowledge, though it never has been earned.

Most human knowledge, nevertheless, comes hard. Either it distills itself painfully out of common experience, or it subjects the scholar, its uncommon devotee, to excruciating efforts of ob-

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servation and close thought. Seldom if ever does inspiration come without such fiery trials before it, and even then it may not come; but if it does, it has to that extent been earned, and is deserved. The university does not count upon its coming, any more than it lays out work in the expectation that only geniuses will do it. Miracles and geniuses are rare in any world, and it is the part of wisdom not to await them. The academic life is bound to be laborious, however many or few the kinds of knowledge it is lived for. It is not as dull as some men think it, but it is duller than a circus or a battlefield; and so it ought to be, since neither in game nor in earnest is it lived in defiance of death. The definition of all life is rather its province: all life, whose most exciting secrets it has no mandate to unearth. To define a thing is not to possess it. The clearest definition of life would be the completest statement of what it is not. Life itself, the individual thing, prefers to be known for what it is; and those who have known it the most directly may be the least articulate about its essence. Its essence, tragic or comic, the university is under no obligation to reveal.

But to say this is not to justify the vulgar charge that academic life is unreal life. It is as real as definition is: as useful, and as clear. In an ideal world the privilege of experience and the duty of understanding would doubtless not exclude each other. Nor in the world we have do they do so altogether; if they could, neither one of them would then make sense. The pure thing and the pure word are not for men as men are made. So the university continues to be looked to for more than dry information and dead fact; for more, even, than the cold light of clearest comprehension. It is looked to for wisdom, a warmer and a wilder thing than any of those. And often enough wisdom is there; nor does it seem too different from the wisdom of the great world, begotten by virtue upon the body of experience. The scholar is not forbidden to have experience; he is a man too, and loves and hates and undergoes ambition. At his worst, if the extreme case be considered, he is unable to make his humanity appear; it was weak to begin with, as could have been true of any man, or else he has darkened it and dampened it with cellar growths which have shut him away at last from the sun and

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from all things that the sun makes clear to normal men. But in the best cases, and happily these are numerous, he has been rendered more sensible, not less so, by the education he has given himself and others. He has become, that is to say, more practical. He has become a man of whom other men will not hesitate to ask advice. In the best world we have any right to expect, the scholar and the citizen will freely converse, will freely compare experience, and will freely tell each other how to live. Not that the distinction between them will have disappeared. It is a rich distinction, not to be minimized in any world that wants to keep on being simple and serious. But talking will take place; and all the kinds of knowledge may then lie down with one another.

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Song of the Passionate Psychologist to His Beloved

WALTER H. EATON

The words mean little: I love you—I care—
I love you more, or less, my dearest one.
The words can lie to you or lie to me,
Conceal deceits of which we're unaware,
Or with our rash consent the truth outrun
So that our ears may ring more pleasantly.
But note: the body moves and feels, invites,
Stretches in curves of joy, grows hot or cold,
Endures, withdraws, or turns to other things;
And though no word can mark where sharp delight
Dulls into sorrow, still some truth is told
In each new movement that each moment brings.
Therefore: from our behavior, clinging here,
We may perhaps infer that love is near

✪ WALTER H. EATON, a sociologist, is now completing *Fragmentary Man, A Study of Industrial Society*. The book will be published in 1956.

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Liberalism

HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

LIBERALISM, AS A POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY, is based on the assumption that freedom is essential for the full development of the human personality and that, therefore, men should be free. The ancestry of liberalism may be traced back to the beginnings of literate man, but its name and formal identity did not become current until early in the nineteenth century, when it was adopted as a party label in Spain and by a British reformist bloc of radicals and Whigs.

The roots of liberalism are religious, philosophical and scientific. The doctrine represents the culmination of a development which goes back at least to the words of the Hebrew prophets, the teachings of the Greek philosophers, and the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount.

The fusion of these influences—some of them largely incompatible with the secular humanism of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century—combined with the political and economic environment of the nineteenth century to create the philosophy and form the movement of liberalism. In its essence, liberalism was anti-authoritarian; its one distinctive aim was the liberation of man from traditional restraints.

Equating liberalism with freedom, as we have, and taking note of liberalism's ancestry help us to understand the confusion which today is frequently associated with the term. Although the emancipation of man has been the enduring hallmark of liberalism, the

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variable ingredient, which has differed with men and with the passing of years, is "emancipation from what?" The practical application and, in fact, the relevant definition of liberalism thus vary with the forces, institutions and traditions which restrain men. The problems of freedom are quite different in a feudal age from what they are in a technological age.

The authors of the liberal creed are heterogeneous. There is a broad gulf between the Whig aristocrats, content with the revolutionary settlement of 1689, and the Benthamite radicals of the nineteenth century. There are profound differences among the Physiocrats, preoccupied with the problems of French agriculture, the Manchester economists of England's industrialized Midlands, the Founding Fathers and the Jacksonian "democrats." It is argued —and with good reason—that their agreements far exceed their differences and that they all partake of the same tradition; but the fact that vital differences do exist makes the use of the term "liberalism" quite difficult in political communication. Difficult as an understanding of the term may be today, however, the growth of liberalism is indeed the story of man's striving for civilization and dignity.

The evolution of the liberal creed paralleled the progress of Western society from a status-based, church-dominated culture to an ever more democratically oriented civilization. The striving for freedom in every age helped change the structure of society. This in turn meant that the locus of power criticized by liberals shifted from church to state and from state to private concentrations of economic power.

In the late Middle Ages and during the Renaissance, the prevailing society was organized on the basis of status: the rights and responsibilities of the individual were determined by his place in the stratified and hierarchic system. The social stress was upon acquiescence and conformity.

Tendencies toward liberalism are early discernible in generations of protest against this authority. The protest was twofold: the religious revolt was closely associated with a desire for economic freedom.

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The medieval system was bound to be challenged successfully as both theological and economic forces strove for freedom from the existing order. The bearers of the challenge were aided by the development of new needs and interests, generated by the slow commercialization and urbanization of Europe, which in turn fostered the emergence of a new middle class.

The new commercial class was the most active force throughout Europe in the struggle for freedom from the restraints of the medieval order. It was the natural enemy of the medieval political organization, primarily because the divisions and disorder of the feudal "state" constituted a serious barrier to trade and commerce. In the late medieval period, therefore, the new middle classes aligned themselves with the monarchs against the nobility and, through the success of this alliance, gained freedom from the complicated and conflicting economic regulation of the feudal aristocracy.

Once the claim of the monarchy was successfully established and a unified system of law imposed within the new nation states, the middle classes turned their attention to means of controlling the "divine right" of the kings they had brought to power. Freedom was now conceived as a problem of the ruler and the ruled. The ruled, in this case the commercial classes, now demanded a rule of law binding upon king as well as subject. The work of Hobbes and Locke focused on the problem of liberty as it related to ruler and ruled, and while their specific conclusions differed, they agreed with each other and with later liberal thinkers that governments were instituted to serve men.

This individualism was a basic characteristic of eighteenth-century thought. Since liberalism as a coherent and defined philosophy was a product of a series of great economic, social, and intellectual changes which culminated in the eighteenth century, it even today bears the stamp of the Enlightenment. The period of the Enlightenment was characterized throughout Europe and America by a more or less unified set of principles, attitudes and beliefs. It was a period of optimism and revolution, of naive faith and debunking. It was, above all, a period of emancipation in religion, politics, economics and art. The unifying concept of the Enlightenment was the belief

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in natural law. The discoveries of Newton had been interpreted as proof that there was a natural order of things in the universe, that the laws of this order might be discovered by human reason, and that these laws furnished absolute and immutable standards for the conduct of governments and men. The implications of this doctrine were many.

First, it suggested that the potentialities of human reason were limitless. If reason could discover the laws of God and nature, there was nothing it might not do. Man could reform himself, his society and his government. And if he could accomplish all this, was he not good and, even more important, was he not perfectible? The optimism of the century was based on this view of man's relationship to society and the universe. Problems were to be solved by an application of reason, and defects of character were to be removed by education. Men of the Enlightenment could, to a certain extent, agree with Condorcet that at last reason had burst into history and progress was inevitable. The Enlightenment's linear concept of progress saw all history as a process of progressive emancipation from superstition and restraints. Not only the mind of man, but history as well, was a blank tablet on which each generation could write its own record.

Second, the concept of natural law as applied to the political scene became the doctrine of innate natural rights inherent in each individual. This concept of natural rights has been persistent in the history of Western civilization. It was expounded by both the Cynics and Stoics in the ancient world, systematized and expanded by St. Thomas Aquinas for the medieval church, and formed the basis of the eighteenth-century struggle for political freedom. In this latter period the doctrines of natural rights and individualism were joined to produce the belief that all men had the right to possess that which they acquired by their own labor, to speak and write as they chose, to petition and to form combinations, and to worship according to their consciences. There is no clearer embodiment of these principles than the Declaration of Independence and the American Bill of Rights; and there was no clearer exponent of these principles than Thomas Jefferson.

Third, in economics the doctrine of natural law again combined

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with individualism to become the basis of eighteenth-century laissez faire. The economists, beginning with Adam Smith, maintained that there were certain simple, universal laws governing the economic realm, which if left to function undisturbed would bring order out of chaos and general welfare out of private interests. The content of these laws was not only known by their exponents, but was pressed upon the populace with a rare, religious vigor. These simple, immutable laws were as follows: (a) All men were born with the natural propensity to trade and barter; (b) human actions were dominated by the profit motive; (c) the profit motive stimulated maximum productivity; and (d) maximum productivity was the greatest social good. Therefore, the pursuit by each individual of his own self-interest, or profit, resulted inevitably in the greatest degree of social welfare.

The liberalism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had much in common with the attitudes described above, as well as with the earlier concepts of Hobbes and Locke. Although Bentham discarded the doctrine of natural law as "nonsense upon stilts" and substituted the principle of utility, the economists associated with utilitarianism retained its content in developing the principle of the natural harmony of interests. Ricardo, Malthus and, later, Herbert Spencer described the pre-established harmony of the economic realm in much the same terms as Adam Smith.

Liberalism indeed showed itself to be a product of the Enlightenment. Individualism, unrestrained independence, the individual as a law unto himself, and pseudo-anarchism characterized the spirit of liberalism for that day. Liberalism was thus a reflection of the political, social, religious and economic aspirations of a rising middle commercial class, influenced by scientific naturalism and the spread of rationalism and secularism. The influence of the Christian faith of human brotherhood under a common Father likewise remained strong, even though the Reformation had destroyed the concept of an intervening priesthood. In fact, the elimination of the priestly hierarchy caused individual personality and conscience to acquire even greater significance. Each individual had the responsibility even for salvation.

Individual initiative was also of paramount importance economi-

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cally. The introduction of private enterprise replaced the rigid system of status by a more flexible system of contracts. Privilege based on birth was being destroyed by enterprising individuals. Francis Bacon's lesson that "knowledge is power" fitted well with the growth of science, and man saw new knowledge challenging old authority.

Liberalism had barely begun to express itself as a formal political philosophy when it ran into the impact of industrialism. It grew out of an essentially pre-industrial, commercial environment and yet almost immediately had to cope with the economic, social and intellectual consequences of the Industrial Revolution. The rise of huge concentrations of wealth which dwarfed the individual rendered obsolete the society of small enterprisers which Adam Smith and Jefferson had in mind. The human values of liberalism were threatened by industrialism; and the political and economic noninterventionist doctrines of liberalism made it difficult for liberals to act to protect those values.

The economic manifestation of eighteenth-century liberalism, already referred to above, based itself on a "natural harmony of interests." If individuals were left free to pursue their self-interest in an exchange economy, based upon a division of labor, the welfare of the group as a whole would automatically result. The classical liberals described a self-equilibrating economic mechanism free from all teleological influences. Moral goals and ethical criteria were to be available for passing ultimate judgment on the system but did not play a part in determining the sequence of events. The one propelling force was the self-interest of the individual which was harnessed to the public good because, in an exchange economy, man must serve others in order to serve himself. The free market operated in accordance with the free choices of individual buyers and sellers, which determined the allocation of resources in the society. The assumption was that in a freely competitive economy, in which no one would be prevented by status from engaging in economic activity, the income received from such activity would be a fair measure of its value to society.

The logic of such an economic creed implicitly supported the institution of private property. Private property, however, accom-

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panied by the onward rush of industrialism, led to the development and triumph of free capitalism and the institution of the factory and its accompanying evils. The development of absentee ownership, which stemmed from private property, further accelerated the difficulties faced by a liberalism geared to a commercial small-entrepreneur economy. With the state abdicating many important areas of activity, private interests readily stepped in to fill the vacuum. To meet these new problems, liberalism in the nineteenth century split in a number of directions.

The Manchester laissez-faire school, represented by Cobden, Bright and Herbert Spencer, tended to remain orthodox and insisted on restricting the role of the state. Cobden opposed factory legislation, and Spencer, in the name of liberalism, opposed almost every state activity. Spencer, idol of two generations of American businessmen, would even forbid government, either local or national, to assume responsibility for the paving, lighting and sanitation of cities.

The radicalism of Bentham and Francis Place represented a school which was prepared to make some adjustment in the antistatist philosophy in order to preserve the human values of liberalism, although Bentham's chief advice to the state was "Be quiet."

The political thinking of John Quincy Adams, as a part of American federalism, represented another approach to the problem. His ideal of abolishing poverty was to come into being by exploiting and distributing the technological fruits of science through state industries, and he thus strikingly anticipated some American liberal departures of a century later. However, the defeat of Adams by Jackson in 1828 put an end to this brief era, and presaged the beginning of a new concept of government serving as a balancing and regulatory force in the political economy.

The career of John Stuart Mill, the most articulate of the nineteenth-century liberals, summed up the transformation of liberalism under the impact of industrialism, from laissez faire to radicalism to a near-socialism. Caught between theory and fact, die-hard utilitarians at first opposed measures such as child labor regulations as unwarranted interference with economic laws and individual liberties. The moral and economic dilemmas of this position,

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however, were soon felt, and a new collectivist approach developed. Living conditions of the poor, as Marx and others pointed out, belied the assumptions of classical economists. This new thinking embraced such odd allies as Owenite socialists, old-line Tory paternalists, trade unionists, Church of England moralists, and romantic-humanitarian followers of Southey and Coleridge. Soon John Stuart Mill's concessions to collectivism signalized British liberalism's withdrawal from doctrinaire individualism toward compromise with the necessity for state controls. The contributions of T. H. Green played an important part. In a series of such compromises, British liberalism broadened its ideological base to include progressivism of all stripes, from individualism to Fabian socialism. America alone remained a stronghold of classical laissez faire. In America, the enlightened conservatism, which in England, as early as the 1820's, exerted a decisive restraint upon economic individualism, did not play the same role. Here enlightened conservatism was diverted by the slavery issue.

In historical perspective, we can see that the complex forces which comprised liberalism yielded emancipating principles. The feudal system was destroyed. Capitalism replaced the static society of the Middle Ages. A functionless aristocracy was removed from control. Tyrants were challenged and curbed. The middle class was left free to employ its creative energies in expanding the means of production and vastly increasing the wealth of society. In setting about to limit the sovereign power, liberals helped make constitutional government, with its accompanying civil liberties, a reality. Liberalism, as formulated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, indeed seemed relevant to its time.

One other major by-product of this liberalism was the impetus given to political democracy. Most of the early liberals were not democrats and feared popular government, but democracy, as expressed by representative government, was the logical outcome of their position. The names of liberals like Jefferson, Bentham, Mills and de Tocqueville became inseparably linked with the struggle for universal suffrage.

The identity of democracy and liberalism, however, was by no means universally granted and still is a subject of serious discussion.

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Guido de Ruggerio wrote in his *History of European Liberalism*:

> From a formal point of view, democracy does not deny the right of private associations and local bodies; but, in substance, it corrupts them by its failure to understand the constructive value of the liberty which should govern their creation and operation. . . . Thus, the democratic State is the result of depriving the citizens of their rights and conferring them upon a general will, a single and indivisible sovereign people. . . . The general will, as democracy demonstrates in practice, is only the will of the numerical majority. The omnipotence of the majority is the practical corollary of democracy; and the formal respect for the rights of minorities loses all effectual sanction just because the individuals have forfeited all power to insist upon their rights, by conferring them bodily upon the State.
>
> The concentration of an immense power in the hands of an often fictitious majority is genuinely tyrannical; and it is therefore no error to place democracy and despotism on the same plane. . . .

Efforts were made to harmonize the objectives of liberalism with the processes of democracy. The term "liberal democracy" was used by some to breach the gap in an attempt to modify majoritarianism and relate it to the concept of individualism. Many liberals, of course, denied that a gap existed and used the terms "liberalism" and "democracy" interchangeably. In fact, however, a clash was inevitable between democracy and liberalism as it developed and reached fruition in the nineteenth century.

The new industrial society which came into being in the late nineteenth century brought with it problems not contemplated by the philosophers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A new power came into being. It was represented by concentrations of vast wealth in relatively few hands and was used to influence and control government, destroy competition, and increase the maldistribution of wealth. Here, then, was a new menace to freedom, as threatening to the individual as the power of a seventeenth-century despot, which required new strategy and new attitudes from those desiring to protect individual liberty.

Anatole France incisively expressed the dilemma of the liberal whose "law, in its majestic equality forbids the rich as well as the

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poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread." It became clear to many that more than political liberty was needed to achieve freedom for man.

It was in such circumstances that a new generation of liberals, hostile to concentrations of power which threaten the individual and keep him from realizing his potentialities, began to call upon government to intervene in behalf of preserving freedom and restoring balance in the society. This new liberalism came to see that the same forces which had once released the productive energies of Western society now restrained them; and that the very forces which had demolished the power of despots now nourished a new despotism.

Twentieth-century liberalism thus tried to adjust itself to the realities of an industrial civilization. It met with both partial success and tragic failure. The failure was in Europe. Only in England under a brilliant Lloyd George government before World War I was a belated effort made to catch up with industrial realities. In France, the Radical Socialist party (Liberal) participated in the Popular Front of the 1930's, but even here the efforts were too late and the forces of economic power too great. Instead of liberalism, socialism, communism and fascism seemed to represent a more specific response to the industrial challenge and therefore swept the working populations and the middle classes.

In the United States, liberalism did seem to make the turn and remains today a dominant political force. An expanding frontier and the blessings of natural resources were partly responsible. They provided greater freedom for action, delayed the rise of the trade union movement, and, in turn, severely handicapped efforts of Marxism to gain a foothold here. Partly responsible too were a series of brilliant political leaders who helped reshape liberalism into an instrument for dealing with industrial society. They included Theodore Roosevelt, who first saw the democratic possibilities in big government and the need for big government to meet big business; Woodrow Wilson; and Franklin D. Roosevelt, who completed the transformation of American liberalism from an anti-statist creed to a philosophy willing to use the state to achieve freedom—an end shared with traditional liberalism.

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It would be well here to refer to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's observation with regard to liberalism in America. In 1938 he wrote:

> Generally speaking, in a representative form of government there are usually two general schools of political belief—liberal and conservative. The system of party responsibility in America requires that one of its parties be the liberal party and the other be the conservative party. This has been the division by which the major parties in American history have identified themselves whenever crises have developed which required definite choice of direction. In Jefferson's day, in Jackson's day, and in Lincoln's and Theodore Roosevelt's and Wilson's day, one group emerged clearly as liberals opposed to the other—the conservatives.
>
> One great difference which has characterized this division has been that the liberal party—no matter what its particular name was at the time—believed in the wisdom and efficacy of the will of the great majority of the people, as distinguished from the judgment of a small minority of either education or wealth. The liberal group has always believed that control by a few—political control or economic control—if exercised for a long period of time, would be destructive of a sound representative democracy. For this reason, for example, it has always advocated the extension of the right of suffrage to as many people as possible, trusting the combined judgment of all the people in political matters rather than the judgment of a small minority.
>
> The other great difference between the two parties has been this: The liberal party is a party which believes that, as new conditions and problems arise beyond the power of men and women to meet as individuals, it becomes the duty of the Government itself to find new remedies with which to meet them. The liberal party insists that the Government has the definite duty to use all its power and resources to meet new social problems with new social controls—to insure to the average person the right to his own economic and political life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That theory of the role of government was expressed by Abraham Lincoln when he said, "the legitimate object of government is to do for a community of people whatever they need to have done, but cannot do at all, or cannot do so well, for themselves, in their separate and individual capacities."

Liberalism today stands generally committed to the qualified use

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of state power to achieve the values of freedom and human dignity. Like their ancestors, modern liberals recognize that concentration of power, whether in private or public hands, is the enemy of freedom.

In the economic realm, this has led the mainstream of American liberalism in the direction of a form of "mixed economy" which would include within it a diversification of ownership. Government power would be exercised through the indirect controls of fiscal and budgetary policy, rather than through direct physical control and central committee planning. This has been accompanied politically by an emphasis on the preservation of "rights," particularly as they relate to the need for dissent and opposition within a democratic society. The guideposts of Justice Holmes have thus been an essential element of modern American liberalism.

In Europe, this new resurgent liberalism is attempting to find a home within the social democratic movement. An increasing number of "liberal socialists" have come to see that total concentration of economic power in the state apparatus is a threat to political freedom, and that economic planning through the price mechanism and a relatively free market is, in many respects, more efficient than planning by state direction.

The liberalism of today does not seek the abolition of the price system, but it does seek the regulation and control of the profit system so as to bring about modifications to suit the requirements of a changing world. In thus invoking the agency of government to protect and assist the individual, liberals call attention to two profoundly important changes which government itself has undergone since the day when Gournay, the eighteenth-century Physiocrat, proclaimed the ideal of laissez faire.

First, despite the notorious shortcomings of bureaucracy, the techniques of public administration are incomparably superior to the pre-scientific methods of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Second, and foremost, the government agency invoked by liberals is one democratically controlled and subject to the will of people who speak, write and assemble freely and who are effectively organized into political parties, trade unions, business and professional groups, fraternities, religious and other independent associations.

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Accordingly, liberals have evolved a program of government action which, by a striking consensus of both critics and adherents, has come to be known as the "welfare state."

The welfare state is based, in the first place, upon acceptance of collective responsibility for providing all individuals with equality of opportunity. This implies, as a minimum, the elimination of disparities brought about through racial and religious discrimination, and the universal availability of adequate educational facilities.

Second, in a society as richly endowed as our own, the welfare state assumes responsibility for the basic economic security of those who are unable, through no fault of their own, to provide such security for themselves. This implies aid to those who are disabled by reason of accident, illness, youth or old age; minimum wage legislation and unemployment insurance for all workers; and aid to economically disadvantaged groups through support of labor unions, consumer organizations, small farmers and independent business.

Third, the welfare state assumes the responsibility for reducing great disparities in the distribution of wealth and bringing about a closer coincidence between the income of the individual and his contribution to society. This implies an appropriate tax policy and a forthright attack upon monopoly and other business arrangements which exaggerate differences in income.

Finally, the welfare state assumes the responsibility for promoting the full employment of our manpower and the full utilization of our resources. These, in turn, spell the objective of full production within the limits of an intelligent human and natural resources conservation and utilization program. Thus, contrary to the contention of its critics, the welfare state is concerned with the production of wealth as well as with the spending and distribution of wealth.

One other modern challenge to traditional liberalism is represented by Sigmund Freud and the development of psychoanalysis. As man began to learn more about himself, some of the earlier conceptions of liberalism came into sharp question. The liberal faith had been based on the judgment of man as a reasonable and good being. By acquiring knowledge and applying the scientific method, man could discover the laws of the universe as they related to his

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problems and solve them. The end result would be good, since man was good.

Man's study of his own psyche, however, raised disturbing doubts about these presuppositions of liberalism. Even with education, men were not necessarily guided by reason; and psychoanalysis discovered that evil was perhaps as essential an ingredient of man as good. In the latter sense, the psychoanalytic challenge to liberalism came close to the Christian theological notion of "original sin," which has had its modern political expression in the works of Reinhold Niebuhr. Since men could be "children of light" and "children of darkness" and since man's subconscious was a cauldron of complexes and neuroses which interfered with the supremacy of reason over emotion, the liberal's faith in man's reason, man's goodness, and the scientific method was severely undermined. The Nazi eruption was the cold historical symbol of man's capacity for evil.

How liberalism responds to this challenge will in large measure determine its propensities for survival. The new discoveries need not in any way lead us to doubt that the goals of liberalism are as valid today as they always have been. The new insights into man which we have achieved now make our earlier faith appear naive, but this new understanding can give us strength and direction as it places the problems faced by liberalism into clearer focus. One essential adjustment which we must make is the need to embrace morality as an active, aggressive force in modern life. We can no longer take morality for granted and assume its superiority in man or its eventual victory over the forces of evil.

The liberalism of today, therefore, must strive to achieve freedom for man within the context of the problems which now face him. It should have no set of fixed dogmas concerning the kind of society in which individuals most fully realize themselves. Beyond a basic commitment to the dignity and worth of the individual, the content of liberalism from age to age and from nation to nation will vary with varying conditions. Liberalism may one day challenge and another day cherish the church; in one age it may seek less government intervention in economic affairs, and in another age, more; it may at one time be hospitable to the specific interests of the business

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community and at another time it may be hostile. The liberal approach must be experimental, the solution tentative, the test pragmatic. Believing that no particular manifestation of our basic social institutions is sacrosanct or immutable, there should be a willingness to re-examine and reconstruct institutions in the light of new needs.

Liberalism, therefore, lacks the finality of a creed, and thus it is without the allure of those dogmas which attract the minds of men by purporting to embody final truth. Whether liberalism can survive in a world seeking security and finality cannot now be predicted. If it does not, our civilization perishes with it. Our task, therefore, is to strengthen and support it with all of our energies and intelligence. We must release ourselves from the shackles of yesterday's traditions and let our minds be bold. Our striving for "liberty," must relate itself to and come to terms with the historic demands of "equality"—which, likewise, has a noble tradition tracing back to the Stoics and the Christian Fathers. With Hobhouse, we must remember that "liberty without equality is a name of noble sound and squalid results."

Finally, liberalism must cement its destiny with that of democratic self-government and the need to protect democracy against its totalitarian enemies from within and without. In the struggle for survival between democracy and totalitarianism, liberalism finds its own struggle for life intimately interwoven. Liberalism, therefore, even as it recognizes the necessity to preserve the spirit and fact of dissent in the political community, must recognize its ultimate loyalty to a majority-rule society and to the protection of all the factors which make such a society possible.

Our faith is that liberalism will survive and prevail. Our faith is bolstered by awareness of man's disquieting sense that no individual and no generation can discern the content of freedom for all time. We state for all to hear that liberalism possesses a durability as strong as man's eternal quest for freedom.

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Pertinent to My Heart

DACHINE RAINER

Beached on my memory, once you,
So miraculously seaweed green,
So fresh, salt, pertinent to my heart,
Beached with the crustaceans, white, white.
And the brutal sun glares, and the wicked rain falls.

Landward, rain moves onto the damp, mildewed days.
Once you, once you in an imperious array
Miraculous green, and I, scarlet in a brilliant time.
Bleached by the peacock sun, fossil grey, earth dun.
And the savage sun, the rain, the seasons follow true.

Bottomless beach, my memory, in the drowning tide, drowns,
Entangling with your cold kiss, your immemorial arms,
To green again it sinks, to algae and the cloistering caves,
And the hot sun the oceans of earth do bend
As the monumental rains upon you, too, descend.

✪ The poetry of DACHINE RAINER has appeared in magazines and anthologies. Her work will be represented in the *Book of Modern American Verse*, edited by W. H. Auden. She is currently working on a novel entitled *Nobody*.

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The "Merry Widow Waltz" in Colors

MARK HARRIS

AT TABLE ONE EVENING A SUMMER AGO at the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire, I inquired of a group of musicians whether any had ever heard of Compinsky. Several had. He was, they said, a concert artist on the West Coast, where he played in a string ensemble which bore (they believed) his name. They generally agreed that he was a superior craftsman. Whether he was still a teacher of music, they did not know.

He was my teacher when I was ten, and he was the last of a succession of five or six men engaged in that capacity, one of whom, as I recall, was deaf, and another of whom habitually stood me before a tripod in his front room, indicated what music I was to play, tuned my fiddle, and then retired to another part of the house.

It was my understanding, at the time, that after exposure for a certain period to knowledgeable persons, I would master the violin, and that this would happen automatically (as it seemed to be happening to other boys), without my having any real interest in the violin, or any aptitude for it, and surely without my having any love for it. I detested it. I detested the case I carried it in, and these emotions I transferred to the men who tried to teach me. Many years would pass before I could stand without resentment in the presence of a musician, or before I could respect, if not love, his art.

Since the time process reportedly involved Practice At Home, I practiced at home for the required period each day, my eye always upon the clock. Unable to read notes, I drew my bow across the strings while fingering them, causing sounds to emanate. That these sounds were not music did not awaken my parents to the futility of their persistence in sending me to music teachers, or even, as was

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so much more to be expected in those depression days, to the waste of their money. Their faith in men and time was unwavering, and at last they sent me to Compinsky, whose method was the most modern, whose fee was moderate, and who, if speech and bearing were true signs, was the man most likely, if any man could, to cause to flower within me seeds of musical genius. There was no doubt that I contained genius, if not by heredity (for no near relation of mine could play, sing or intelligently listen), then by analogy: I could, after all, compose verse, I was swift at arithmetic, I laughed at advanced jokes on the radio, and I could thread film on a motion-picture projector.

The arrangement with Compinsky, because of certain unique ways in which it differed from the arrangements with all the other men, delighted me. I was to place myself before him four days a week, Monday through Thursday, at half-past two. But there would be no Practice At Home, and, further, the daily lesson was not to be undergone in the loneliness and isolation of a private home but in the company of a group. I did not always manage well with other children, but I liked to be with them. We were to congregate in the band room of the William Wilson, Jr., Junior High School in Mount Vernon, now called the Martin H. Traphagen School in honor of the gentleman who was its principal at that time and whom I feared above either God or my father. Under the Compinsky method other odiums were abolished. Since he supplied instruments (they were of a special sort), there was no necessity to carry a violin case anywhere; indeed, the necessity to own a violin was eliminated, since he did not believe in Practice At Home and since the notion that anyone might play a violin in a spare hour, except by decree, did not then fall within the reach of my imagination.

A bonus to all this was, of course, inherent in the fact of one's being dismissed from class at half-past two on four days a week. This immensely shortened the afternoon session, which otherwise would have extended infinitely to three-fifteen. At half-past two, then, four days a week, musicians—as my teacher called them—were excused. Upon this word I hastened from the room, though the fact of my usually being first from the classroom in no way as-

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sured my being first to the band room. I stopped to drink. I banged my way through the swinging double doors of the boys' room. With more great noise I emerged. I drank, and I then proceeded into the fresh air, the entrance to the band room being happily reachable only by a route which carried me through the out-of-doors and past, and just below, the windows of the classroom from which, in the name of music, I had escaped. Near the band room my bicycle, with all the rest, stood in its stall, and occasionally I sounded my horn, thus advising my classmates above, who would know whose horn it was and who had sounded it, that I was free and they were not. This behavior was several times described to me by Mr. Traphagen, our principal, as an abuse of privilege. It now occurs to me that in view of my repeated abuses of privilege I could not have feared him as terribly as I thought I did. In any case, I soon turned up in the band room where, from among a large assortment, I chose the smallest available violin. Violins wearied my left arm, and they continued to do so despite the Compinsky method, which was designed to reduce or wholly eliminate so many of the physical hazards.

Under the Compinsky method, students sat on a long bench (or perhaps on chairs) fronted by a horizontal length of lumber supported by uprights. Hooks were drilled into the lumber at intervals, and over these hooks we looped a wire affixed to the scrolls of our fiddles. It was then possible to struggle with at least some small hope of victory against the natural tendency of the violin to point itself floorward. It was even possible, when Compinsky was not looking, to allow the left arm to dangle.

As gravity was defeated, so also was the greatest obstacle of all: under the Compinsky method I could read music, for upon a board elevated before us scores were available, not in the orthodox black-and-white but in color, painted there by Compinsky himself, and very gay, like the wallpaper at home. Notes had colors, and these colors identically corresponded to colors painted upon notches carved into the finger boards of our violins. If I knew which string to play on, as I usually did, it was then required of me only that I place a finger upon the designated color and draw my bow: the desired music would produce itself, as upon a player piano or

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phonograph. Science operated in conjunction with Time, and it was now not to be doubted, after the five or six false starts under the five or six old-fashioned men, that my genius would blossom. A boy who could thread a motion-picture projector could match colors. I was adept. Moreover, it was fun. We played many songs, but the one I best remember was the "Merry Widow Waltz," which to this day I do not hear without responding inwardly, "red-green or-rr-ange, red-green or-rr-ange," and so forth. A Strauss waltz is not a piece of music but a series of colors.

The violin now became a game, and because I was quick at the game I liked it. I cultivated an affection for the physical instrument, its smell, its shape, and for the creak of tuning pegs in their sockets. I endlessly adjusted these pegs, blandly undoing the work of tuning which Compinsky accomplished sometime before half-past two, and I doubted, when he pleaded with me to desist, that there was, in the first place, any such thing as a violin's being "in tune" or "out of tune." The E string, tight or loose, had for me an unvarying sound, higher than A, which was higher than D, which was higher than G. It was sufficient that these strings bore a comparative relationship to one another, and any greater discrimination than this was a pretense, a manufactured complication. I liked to resinate my bow; I liked the smell of the rosin and the pleasant identification I then could have with baseball players, who used rosin and who were the figures of earth with whom I most wished to be identified.

Compinsky's system was better suited to my day's program than those of the other men, but I attached no credit to him for his system. For one thing, I could not fully respect or honor him since he was not a regular teacher on the regular pay roll: he was paid by the head, and since his livelihood partially depended upon my continued attendance I was entitled to certain liberties. It was, for example, my privilege to ignore his hands, which he waved before us. This was another pretense, the idea of music being to match colored notes, not to be bound by a tempo. He was a small man, whose hair was gray and who surprised me by his energy, for I thought him very old. He was perhaps forty. He spoke with a foreign accent (Hungarian, I think), and this meant that my feeling

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toward him had to be ambivalent. It would, for this reason, have been ambivalent even if he had been on the regular pay roll. I respected his wisdom and learning, for all foreigners were wise and learned, but it was my patriotic duty to show him less respect and obedience than I showed a birthright-American. He had no right to discipline me or to tamper with my morality, as Martin H. Traphagen had, so that coming late to lessons or dangling my arm at my side were my prerogatives as one who spoke with no accent and had had the good sense, to begin with, to be born in so American a place as Mount Vernon, New York. Unquestionably I was cruel to him, not so much by the performance of disruptive acts or deeds as by my habit of fastening upon him a perpetual scowl registering sentiment to the effect that I thought him a manufacturer of complexity, an alien person defective in spirit, that I thought music a humbug, and that ten thousand musicians were not pure enough to touch the letters of the cap of John J. McGraw.

Could the Compinsky method make a musician of a child? This was the pragmatic question apparently asked by school authorities, by parents, and perhaps by competing teachers of music who resented the Compinsky monopoly at our school.

One thing should be said at the outset. The Compinsky method did not forever paralyze a child's musical development. If this has a negative sound, it is due largely to the absence of data. All that is known is that one of the youngsters who read color-scores with me now plays in the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra; another, according to a Mount Vernon *Daily Argus* of recent date, is "slated" to offer a recital at Carnegie Hall and has been "widely hailed" by "critics."

But parents and school authorities could not wait a generation for an answer to their question. As often happens in a community where democracy is better understood than art, it was decided to put the matter to a vote. A concert would be offered, and parents and school officials would judge.

I knew nothing of the controversy. Parents and teachers were periodically embattled between and among themselves on a wide variety of issues, and my mother talked about them on the telephone. But I could not have been less interested, and so it was that

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on the night of the concert I but vaguely sensed that this was somehow to be a test of the Compinsky method. Had I been more aware of the crisis I might have exerted myself more cleverly (though perhaps with a poorer result) than I did, for I was of a naturally sympathetic nature, and these sympathies would have extended to him, even though he was a Hungarian, by virtue of the fact that he stood alone against my natural enemies. His bread and butter and his pride were at stake, and I knew something about both, especially pride, living, as I did, in a predominantly Yankee neighborhood in the year 1932—so triumphant a year for the Yankees and so dismal a one for the Giants that McGraw quit baseball in mid-season. I may not, day by day, have been cordial, but in a moment of crisis —had I *known* the crisis—I would somehow have risen to the occasion.

Compinsky, the artist reduced in a depression time to teaching the likes of me, stood before us that night in a tuxedo, and this I remember along with a mild sensation of panic when I discovered the black and absolute nakedness of the upper saddles and finger boards of the violins upon which we were to play. I then saw that we were to read from ordinary black-and-white scores placed on individual tripods. I could not read this despicable foreign language, and if I could have read it I would not have known how to finger it. It was a camouflage.

But the group did well. Many of them no doubt practiced at home in excess of the Compinsky minimum. I do not recall what was played, but it was played acceptably. I myself did not play, though I swept my arm upward when others did, and downward when theirs came down, conforming to the direction of the majority. When they pizzicatoed, I assumed the poses and imitated the gestures of one who was pizzicatoing, and when they stopped, I stopped.

The audience applauded, and Compinsky turned to it and spoke briefly, concluding with the announcement that I would now perform a solo.

It seems to me unlikely that I had not been told of this in advance. It simply had made no impression upon me. I had no fear of crowds or assemblages of any kind, and it would have made little

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difference to me whether I was matching colors in the band room or before a sizable gathering. But at some time between the time I was told and the time I was called upon, the decision was made to set black-and-white scores before us. Surely he knew that I was not only not a genius but was, musically speaking, absolutely illiterate and figuratively deaf. Or else he had not meant to call upon me, but on someone else, and then, having spoken my name, could not, in courtesy to my parents, who were present, if not to me, who deserved none, retract.

The soundest hypothesis is that it was deliberate on his part, that he well understood my nature, knew that I had the courage of ignorance and shamelessness; if I was his least promising student I was also his bravest, and to this audience trained more in democracy than in art my confident energy would appear to be virtuosity.

I strode to the front of the stage. Since I could not read music I was frank enough not to take any with me, but I remember Compinsky's setting it before me and breathing a few words which I did not hear but which I understood to be a phrase of encouragement. I needed no encouragement. I waved with my bow to my mother and father, grinned and played. I did not turn a page. I played fragments of melodies as I remembered them from the gay, hand-painted scores, usually the first few bars—for these I knew by memory—of the most familiar waltzes, the strains beyond which nobody whistles.

But as I played I knew for the first time that this was not music. I did not know the word "transitions," but as I leaped from melody to melody their absence offended even me, and as I played I was gripped by a long-enduring guilt, for in these intense moments I realized the enormity of what was taking place: a man's livelihood was in the balance, and his pride. It was I, not he, who was a pretender; I had known this all along, and I did not so much mind the truth of it as I lamented its exposure, and I resolved, while playing, never to touch a violin again. This resolution I faithfully kept.

When my arm wearied I stopped. The applause I received was distinctly greater in volume than that awarded to the group when we had played en masse, and the confusion this generated within me exceeds in vividness all the other vivid memories of that eve-

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ning. Had all values been inverted, all moral law revoked? Was bad good, and fakery to be applauded? Only in my daydreams was such emancipation conceivable, as when, for example, with the first stirrings of physical passion, I fancied that a law had been passed enforcing universal nakedness.

Perhaps I *was* a genius! Compinsky, arising from the piano stool, smiled a smile at me which clearly told me that his admiration for me was limitless. *You are a genius,* said his smile. Was he, too, deceived? Was I the only person in the hall in possession of the truth? He bade the audience good evening, and then he led us in a recessional.

Not long afterward, Compinsky and the Compinsky method ceased to prevail in the band room of William Wilson, Jr., Junior High School, and though I was at first assailed by a sense of guilt, I came in time to see that there was no causal relationship between my violin solo and his subsequent departure. This guilt, lightly lingering even twenty years after, was put to its final rest at the MacDowell Colony where I heard that Compinsky, secure in his reputation, is on the West Coast. And over the years I have retranslated his smile: *I know, and you have just begun to suspect, that democrats often love us for the wrong reasons.*

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What the Japanese Intellectuals Are Thinking

DALLAS FINN

AT A TIME WHEN OUR COUNTRY is competing for the mind of Asia, it is disconcerting to find that the best brains in one of our most secure and deeply committed of Oriental allies regard the United States and its chief local supporters, their conservative parties and business community, with a lack of enthusiasm ranging from philosophic resignation to outright hostility. While it is true that Japanese intellectuals alone do not make up the mind of Japan, the special place occupied by the intelligentsia in Japan's neatly classified society makes it a well-defined and articulate force to be reckoned with. Even the word "intellectual" has such a splendid reputation in Japan that almost any flower arranger, highschool teacher, expert at Chinese calligraphy, pianist, university student or subscriber to serious magazines is apt to be called—or call himself—an "intellectual." In this kind of atmosphere in which college graduates far outnumber good jobs, and people who cannot afford automobiles, television sets and similar distractions are forced to accept the consolations of philosophy, the real intellectuals—the professional writers and thinkers—command an unusually large and susceptible audience. Some of this audience sit in the overcrowded university classrooms, of course, but most intellectual amateurs need go no farther than their corner bookstore—in Japanese cities, bookstores are almost as omnipresent as drugstores in America—to buy one of the four or five journals of opinion, Japanese equivalents of the *Atlantic* or *Harper's* with a strong dash

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of the *Monthly Review,* which contain in an attractively *avant-garde* format the correct political ideas.

Though would-be intellectuals are numerous, the number of commentators and scholars who express the political convictions for their class is actually very small, consisting probably of less than a hundred men and a woman or two. They all have strikingly similar and very Japanese backgrounds. Aside from an occasional bit of graduate study, usually in Europe, they are products of a thoroughly native education. Also, most of them have the unassailable prestige of being graduates of Tokyo University, the leading government school, where admission is based on scholarship rather than family or money, and where a number of them hold famous academic posts. But it would be a mistake to describe the arbiters of intellectual opinion as narrow academic types. Some of them are editors, some novelists, many are *hyoronka,* a peculiarly Japanese kind of critic who comments willingly on almost any current topic, especially in the round-table discussions to which the Japanese press and radio are passionately addicted. The typical intellectual retains a seat in the academic world but prefers to stand somewhere between the ivory tower and the city desk in this heady new period when, after years of reticence during militarism, war and occupation, he is free at last to speak out on public issues.

This unaccustomed opportunity may explain why the intellectuals write, but not why they write so much, or why so much of what they write is critical of current trends in Japanese economic and political life and the alignment with the United States. Probably the best explanation for their extraordinary volubility is economic. Without a share in the postwar business boom, professors and writers, who suffer from inflation along with the ordinary Japanese worker for whom they show an understandable sympathy, are forced to supplement their inadequate salaries by writing articles. Inevitably the articles are written around salable subjects like current affairs, and almost as inevitably take a sharply critical line, because that is the attitude popular with the readers of serious magazines whose editors too must give a thought to making a living. This vicious circle of critical writers selling critical articles to critical journals for critical readers has been exploited particularly

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by the left-wing publishing concerns, notably the house of Iwanami whose magazine *Sekai* (The World) demands a line which the Japanese call liberal but which by less casual American standards is leftist—or worse.

There is always a danger that Americans, a people notorious for wanting to be loved even by foreign intellectuals, will overbuy, and that the Japanese with real economic and political power will oversell the theory that the intellectuals are shameless opportunists. Of course, some of them are; and it is hard for professors to resist appealing to the prejudices of their own class and the incurably radical university students who are, after all, an important source of a Japanese scholar's prestige and income. A good deal of justification can be found for the theory, naturally the one the intellectuals prefer, that they are sincerely motivated by idealistic considerations. As a virtual who's who of the Japanese cerebral world declared in a special issue of *Sekai* published just after the intellectually unpopular San Francisco Peace Conference, from now on the intellectuals who so cravenly submitted to the miltarists before the war are determined never again to surrender their principles without a struggle. Clearly these Japanese are having an acute attack of conscience.

Intellectuals agree that their country is pursuing a *gyaku course*, a term they have contrived, characteristically, out of Japanese and English, to mean a turning back to reactionary policies. In sharp contrast to Americans who consider world communism infinitely more of a threat to Japan than the revision of occupation reforms, which may have been unsuited to Japan anyway, most prominent intellectuals, usually men well beyond forty, regard the quick revival of conservative forces, the revision of occupation laws, possible changes in the new constitution, and other proposals reminiscent of the authoritarian past as infinitely more dangerous to Japan than communism. Consequently, since the last year of the occupation, the leading intellectuals and their vocal following have opposed the revisionist program of the Japanese government, led first by one conservative party and now by another with virtual unanimity. In the quick shift of Japanese fates the intellectuals find themselves in the ironical role of defending the status quo and a

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system introduced by the United States. Here lie the roots of their anti-Americanism. They could not hate the United States so much now if they had not loved it so well in the recent past. With an emphasis on principle highly unrealistic to Americans, the intellectuals insist that they have clung to the true democratic faith while America, once altruistically devoted to Japan's democratization, has sacrificed its ideals for power politics. The United States must think democracy is all right for a defeated enemy, they imply, but not good enough for a friend.

Rearmament is the issue in which American interests and the interests of the Japanese intellectuals clash head-on. Opposing intellectuals range from moderate men like the respected president of Tokyo University, Tadao Yanaibara, and Masamichi Royama, famous journalist, educator and prolific writer, to Shigeto Tsuru, the brilliant American-educated economist who once taught at Harvard, and Hyoe Ouchi, an elder economist known locally as a "non-Communist Marxist." (It is pointless to extend the list to extremists like Goro Hani, inveterate attender of Soviet and Chinese peace conventions, or Ikuo Oyama, wartime refugee at Northwestern University, now a recipient of a Stalin prize.) Their opposition is based first on the pacifist conviction that suppression at home and foreign adventure would go hand in hand with a new Japanese army. Second, of course, is their belief that rearmament is contrary to the new constitution whose Article Nine outlawing war was quibbled away by the conservative Liberal party under the leadership of former Prime Minister Yoshida to the point of permitting arms for self-defense. Even strongly anti-Communist intellectuals blame Yoshida, and indirectly the American government, for permitting the nucleus of an army to be established without consulting the wishes of the Japanese people.

Unable to prevent modified rearmament and many revisions of occupation reforms such as the strengthening of the police, increasing national control over teachers and local government, anti-subversive legislation and a secrecy law protecting American-lent arms, the intellectuals are determined to protect the constitution from further encroachment. Once the precedent gets established that this basic document can be revised easily, warns the president of Tokyo

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University, Japan will rapidly lose her political freedom, and most others agree that the constitution is one and indivisible. When a survivor of Tojo's cabinet, now prominent in the ruling Democratic party, announced his plans to restore the old family system, the intellectual Cassandras reminded the people that discarding Article Twenty-four (equal civil and economic rights within the family) meant throwing out innumerable related concepts of individual dignity, sexual equality and nondiscrimination which appear throughout the constitution, thus undermining the philosophic bases of democratic government. This situation benefits the Japanese Communists and their friends who have had spectacular success in getting intellectuals, including both the semi-official Science Council and the leading literary society, to lend their names and prestige to the far from disinterested campaign to "Preserve the Peace Constitution."

Although it is hard to tell whether they mean it, most intellectuals declare their faith in a democratic government for Japan, but reserve grave doubts about its chances of ultimate success. The most idealistic insist that democracy and a longing for human dignity is not foreign and unnatural to the Japanese soul, but even they subscribe to the general intellectual pessimisms: there is no basic understanding between the Japanese parties; the conservatives are not so much preservers as reactionaries; and democracy has formidable opponents in the economic interests which control and support the conservative parties and the big bureaucracy which, being free of popular control, exercises broad unrestrained authority. Japanese scholars, who have read our history more carefully than we have theirs, point out that unlike the West, where capitalism and democracy grew up side by side, Japanese business started under government subsidy and still feels no stake in popular government beyond putting its money where it will do the most good at election time. Naturally the addition of a defense establishment to this already powerful combination does not cheer the intellectuals.

These melancholy observations lead most scholars to conclude that the best solution to Japan's political problems would be to strengthen the Socialists so that they could counterbalance the pre-

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vailing conservatism and help give Japan a stable parliamentary system. But this is a discouraging prospect since the Socialists, besides being split over the issue of rearmament, show as little disposition to behave well in the Diet as the conservatives. Their spectacular riot on the floor of the legislature last year discredited parliamentary government as much as the Liberal party's bribery scandals, to which the highbrow commentators gave more critical attention. The intellectuals are at a loss to see how the Socialists, whose popularity rests on the two slender pillars of organized labor and the intellectuals themselves, can extend their political support. Spurred by the Communist-derived formula that Japan's future lies with the masses (organized labor, farmers, women and young people) the intellectuals hope that Japan's political illiterates can be liberalized, particularly the hidebound farmers—the Solid South of the conservative vote. But the farmers, their land hunger assuaged by American reforms, refuse to feel any affinity with industrial workers whose eight- or ten-hour day in the factory sounds relaxing compared to their own continual grind on the land. Under the circumstances, few intellectuals would exclude the Communists from politics in view of their value as another source of strength against "reaction."

Honest commentators admit that there are other reasons for the failure of Japanese democracy besides the wicked old conservatives: Japan's ingrained social habit of conformity; the preference for indirect means rather than frank debate; and particularly, economic conditions which make politics and corruption almost inseparable. Forced to conclude that political progress is impossible without better economic solutions, most intellectuals reject the present form of Japanese capitalism, which in their eyes shows no respect for democratic methods or the good of society as a whole, in favor of some kind of a planned economy such as reformed capitalism or, more likely, socialism. The scholars out in left field like to theorize about Japan's being caught in the last throes of capitalism, but not many others consider communism a practical solution to Japan's maldistribution of wealth or lack of long-range economic policies. Japan, they argue, should advance toward socialism by democratic means, but here they find themselves trapped in a paradox. They

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cannot improve politics without improving economics, which cannot be improved without politics. Unfortunately, the Socialists, the only practical reformers of Japanese capitalism, lack the strength to do it.

Economic reform and a Socialist victory would be possible, the intellectuals reason, if only the United States could be eliminated from the scene. By giving economic aid and encouraging rearmament, America enables the conservatives to hold on to power with the meretricious prospect of economic security for the Japanese. Only a few scholars can accept or understand that the United States is keeping Japan from economic collapse. Most of the articulate ones insist that we are forcing capitalism upon Japan even though (as Japanese economists, generally a pretty progressive lot, charge) that system in Japan is characterized by such chronic inflation, high prices, low wages and narrow profits that it is incapable of improving the ordinary worker's standard of living. They widely condemn rearmament as being unnecessary and tragically uneconomic, considering the already low standard of living. Whether they accept Japan's economic dependence on the United States or maintain the not very convincing theory that Japan can and must achieve economic independence by unrestricted trade with China and the rest of Asia, the intellectuals cannot escape the depressing fact that their economy does not offer a firm foundation for a stable or democratic government. As a result, a few fear communism, a few welcome it, but most intellectuals expect a future of repression and reactionary control.

Turning to foreign relations, the intellectuals generally agree that co-operation with the United States against communism is not in the nation's best interests. What Japan needs most is detatchment and peace, and for that reason writers who deplore the United States-Japan Security Treaty and its corollary permitting American bases in Japan have almost developed a new literary form depicting the frightful goings on in such places. This subject, to the aid and comfort of the Communists, makes an almost irresistible appeal to intellectuals who see cultural desecration in our rest centers in quiet, ancient cities like Nara, moral degradation in the blatant presence of pom-pom girls, despite the flourishing state of native

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prostitution; and a threat to the younger generation in the proximity of our bases to schools, a situation dictated less by American military necessity than the phenomenal Japanese birth rate. The unfortunate encounter of the twenty-three Japanese fishermen with the atomic fallout from Bikini—an event which, unlike the establishment of bases, could hardly be justified on the grounds of benefiting the Japanese—gave the intellectuals a much wider audience for their criticism of America. While the Bikini incident was a present to the professional peace-wagers whose National Council on Banning Atomic Bombs collected over thirty million signatures, it probably gave them less ammunition than it gave the neutralists. At this crucial point the most well-disposed intellectuals were willing to bring down a curse on both houses, Russian and American. However bad communism is supposed to be, the intellectuals believe the cost of joining an anti-Communist crusade would be suppression at home, dangerous involvement abroad, and the risk of national destruction in an atomic war. For Japan to become another South Korea or Nationalist China is a humiliating thought. Peace is the tie that binds all intellectuals together. All favor negotiating peace and trade agreements with the Communist nations. If there is any disagreement in this emotional rather than logical advocacy of over-all peace, it arises only over the extent to which Japan should associate herself with Asia and the Communist world.

For moderate men like Masamichi Royama and Shigeru Nambara, the retired president of Tokyo University, a kindly Christian who opposes Japan's becoming a satellite of either side, and his successor Yanaibara, who considers Russian-American antagonism to be fanatical intolerance, neutralism is clear-cut. At the other extreme, Stalin prize winner Oyama, the famous sociologist Ikutaro Shimizu, and Goro Hani urge abrogating the treaties with America immediately and climbing on the Chinese bandwagon with its splendid banner of Asian solidarity emblazoned with Chou En-lai's Five Principles. For the rest, the majority of intellectuals in between, neutralism, suspicion of American motives and strong pro-Asian sentiments tend to get muddled. Following the theory that Japan should invest in a policy of reinsurance as India and the

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Colombo nations are doing, the leading neutralist Hyoe Ouchi ridicules the suggestion by the American scholar Edwin Reischauer that Japanese scholars should show their people that our treaties are for Japan's defense too. Both he and the prolific Shigeto Tsuru agree that America's interest in Japan is basically selfish and undependable and that the United States shows less devotion to peace than the Communist nations. Tsuru, in the course of many articles deploring McCarthyism and the decline of traditional American tolerance and understanding (his tribute to our free society which received him as a youthful refugee from the Japanese thought police is moving and probably sincere) blames America for associating genuine movements for national independence and economic improvement with a fictitious Communist plot for world domination. The new China is here to stay, he insists, and America with its exaggerated zeal against communism has lost its moral leadership in Asia. The tendency to admire Asian resurgence is often so great that even temperate types will remark that all-Asian solidarity is a better goal than neutralism. Nehru, whose statements, like those of the Red Chinese leaders, are frequently reproduced in the intellectual magazines, receives less attention as a neutralist than as a supposed collaborator with Chou in Pan-Asian harmony.

In spite of the strong trend away from the United States, it does not seem wise to conclude that the intellectuals as a class are hopelessly alienated from the West. Pan-Asianism is often negative, the reverse side of anti-Americanism, while the genuine scholarly interest in America, England and the West proceeds undimmed. There are thousands of English teachers for one teacher of Chinese, and hundreds of experts on all aspects of the West contrasted with a handful who know anything about the culture of China, let alone India. Knowledge of Russian language and affairs is almost equally rare. Intellectuals, the main channel through which Western culture has poured into Japan for the last century, are not likely to shift their basic orientation. Among the intellectuals as a class, and not only among those who would actually present ideological difficulties to our visa officers, there is the persistent complaint that America concentrates on Japanese business and government leaders and does not try to understand the intellectuals. Those intellectuals

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who are sought out or who visit America tend to be too safe and pro-American to have a very beneficial effect on their return to Japan where leftism starts about where it ends in America. The political alienation of the intellectuals, whose lack of power and money makes them unreasonably proud and sensitive, may even be explained in part by the fact that we who have such enormous influence over their lives pay them so little attention.

But Americans who watch the Japanese intellectuals cannot help being appalled by their critical hostility. The explanation that they are Communist is obviously incorrect, and the explanation that they are influenced by Communist propaganda is obviously partly correct, and yet an unsatisfactory way to account for their attitude. It is hard to see how cultural interchange can overcome a distance which is essentially not one of space but of time and history. No American over thirty-five can fail to see the resemblance between the kind of thinking going on in the Japanese intellectual world today and what went on in similar circles here in the thirties. There is the same intense emotional revulsion to war and military strength and the sense of crisis over the slow progress of democracy, over poverty, the loss of old values and political incompetence. The Japanese intellectuals' alliance with each other against the outside Japanese world minimizes their differences and creates a tolerance like that found in prewar America for all kinds of political solutions calculated to improve human conditions: liberal democracy, socialism or communism. As in the days of the depression many Americans who were not Communists took wide-eyed interest in the Soviet system, so today many Japanese with an Oriental example even closer at hand cannot help being impressed by what looks to them like an independent and dynamic way to handle social and economic problems.

Japan's intellectuals have been set irretrievably on their present course by the facts of Japan's national life. Finding no help in their own narrow tradition for the problems of a modern industrial society, the intellectuals have been forced to shop abroad for values. The result is that they accept foreign ideas more readily and thoroughly than the rest of the nation and favor broad, universalist concepts, the kinds of ideas that avoid nationalism and religion

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and fit in as well in Japan as anywhere else. Evidently their highest value is what they rather grandiloquently call "humanism," a concept which adjusts very well with their self-conscious affinity for "spiritual" rather than "material" values. The test the intellectuals apply to their political theories, and lately—shades of Dos Passos and earlier Steinbeck—to their literature is whether they serve the cause of human welfare. This attitude explains the intellectuals' eager acceptance of the occupation reforms, the war-renouncing constitution, and their concern that these gains should not be lost. They do not mourn the loss of old Japanese concepts contrary to humanist values, like racial destiny or the sacred imperial family, and they propose to modify narrow nationalism with a new patriotism based on "universal thoughts of peace and democracy." The trouble with Japanese humanism is that like many Western ideas it has taken on a flexible, elusive meaning in Japan. Democrats, Socialists, Communists, all insist they are "humanists," though how dialectic materialism or the mass conformity of communism square with humanism is not clear and leads one to conclude that some Japanese are either poor Communists or poor humanists.

If there is anything which makes as great an appeal to the Japanese mind as doing good for humanity, it is the idea that the universe is rational and that all problems, including those of government, are susceptible to rational solutions. Based on a combination of distinctive national experiences and practical applications, British muddling-through and American democracy cannot be reduced to an abstract theory and put out in a cheap edition by Iwanami. Therefore they lack appeal, especially for younger Japanese scholars. Probably this is what Tsuru and others who follow the modern, economic approach to political problems rather than the old-fashioned liberal line mean when they say that America lacks "social science." Thus Marxism with its seemingly irrefutable logic preserves its uniquely strong position among scholars even though they are rarely ever practicing Communists. Perversely, evidence against communism is much more skeptically received than evidence against the American brand of democratic capitalism. This may be because our economic system is still considered a rapacious, unregulated form of exploitation and because Americans, with their

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not altogether democratic practices in Japan, have become too familiar and give the Chinese and Russians, by contrast, the prestige of the unknown. Many intellectuals appear to be totally unable to relate theory to experience. That, rather than insincerity, seems to be the best explanation for why humane and intelligent men remain Marxists despite their opposition, expressed in hundreds of magazine articles, to the slightest hint of the monster state with its repressive police methods.

Although the intellectuals are a querulous and difficult lot we may not be justified in becoming deeply alarmed at their present state of mind. For one thing, a good deal of their hostility can be explained away as a natural reaction to a long occupation and the six-year tenure of conservative Premier Yoshida, a man who never bothered to disguise his contempt for both press and professors. If we can avoid obvious meddling in Japanese politics in favor of conservative policies, and if we permit Japan to play a self-respecting role in foreign affairs, it is very probable that a number of prominent intellectuals will become much more favorably disposed toward the United States. Intellectual enthusiasm for joining the United Nations is surprisingly strong, and Communist attempts to block it would be deeply resented. The current fad for neutralism and everything Asiatic might be seriously diminished, too, if the Russian offer of peace and the Chinese offer of trade bog down in protracted, unpromising negotiations.

Finally, we cannot be sure that the intellectuals, though they dominate the serious magazines and educate the bureaucracy, have much real power in Japanese affairs. On this point even they themselves disagree. Some reluctantly accept the unflattering view of Japanese businessmen and bureaucrats that they are *aojiroi interi*, "ineffectual eggheads." Others point with pride at Socialist gains and also take credit for checking constitutional revision and mobilizing opinion against further rearmament. Publishing statistics do not flatter the intellectuals, for while the most moderate of the intellectual monthlies, *Bungei Shunju*, has a circulation of about 500,000, *Sekai* and two or three other typical intellectual journals struggle along on a readership of between 50 and 80,000—proof that they are read largely by students and other intellectuals rather

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than the general, highly literate Japanese public. As for the bureaucrats, there is considerable evidence that once the Japanese student deserts the nonconformist conformity of the intellectual world, he responds with equal discipline to the new conformity of the Finance Ministry or the Foreign Office and leaves his youthful thoughts behind him. Even the alarming alliance of intellectuals with left-wing labor is a tentative and awkward relationship, for most intellectuals cannot help looking down on practical politics and feeling uncomfortable with "uncultured" workers and union leaders.

One of the tragedies of Japan's compartmentalized society is that it divorces the intellectuals so completely from all sources of power that they become hopelessly abstract and impractical while practical men and politicians are generally unrestrained in matters of principle and scornful of intellectual advice. In their isolation it is not surprising that many intellectuals take refuge in negative, pessimistic and often irresponsible ideas. There may be considerable justice in the estimate the octogenarian dean of Japanese intellectuals makes of his colleagues and his country. Japan's genius, writes Nyozekan Hasegawa, is essentially practical, not theoretical, and that is why the intellectuals are weak and uncritical of borrowed philosophy. Craftsmen made the distinctive houses, gardens and useful objects of old Japan, and their descendants, the industrialists, technicians, scientists and businessmen have built modern Japan. It is not to her saints and savants that Japan owes her strength, Hasegawa concludes, but to her practical men.

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POEMS

by LOUISE TOWNSEND NICHOLL

Second Wonder

I woke, but unawake, with that slow waking
Induced by the persistent touch of light,
Thinking the moon a ball, a fruit, a mirror
Fixed in the west and terribly unshaking,
A small thing waxed unnatural, polished bright,
The metaphor come true and turned to terror,
And I so panic-struck at the enigma,
"The gibbous moon?" I hazarded a guess,
Casting the wonder off, unwonted stigma,
Being so long unused to fearlessness.

How excellent the vision which reverses
What we expect to see, and thus allows
The second wonder, how the night is hung
With moons aplenty evermore agreed.
For in the moment when the reason trembled
The moon became again what it resembled:
A ball, a mirror, and a fruit indeed,
Apple still clinging to the spiral boughs
Of that gnarled tree the universe among
The scattered orchards of the universes.

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Waking from life but slowly, in a daze,
With gravitated sight intense as thirst
We may see even death itself at first
Incongruous; we may start up to gaze!
But anyone who does not seek too soon
To put amazement and its source asunder
Will come at last upon death's second wonder,
Since what it most resembles it will be:
Mirror reflecting other light, a moon
Involved in quite another solar tree.

by DAVID MORTON

Obscure Incident

The noble and ignoble met and paired,
Were wedded and begot ambiguous sons
Who multiplied and filled the earth and fared
Ambiguous ways, with stunted wings—and guns;
Were christened Dante, here, Capone, there,
For dreams of Heaven, and days of Alcatraz—
And passed the hybrid cross they had to bear
To sons who died in grace, or poisoned gas.

The later girls and boys are much abused:
By angels, devils, crying in their blood,
The ancient hymns of darknesses and lights—
And haunted always, here, and sore confused
By so much mud, and glints across the mud,
Persisting from those singular marriage rites.

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by HANNAH KAHN

Conformer

Since what was wood has turned to stone
and what was flesh is ashen grey . . .
Flesh now withered, yet the bone
exposed defies decay.

Bone endures and flesh decays
and I conform . . . and sing the praise
of what is soft of touch and tone
submissive to the hardened bone.

Counterpoint

For this my daily bread I give
the flow, the curve, the bent
and allegoric legacy
of my entire intent.

And from this daily bread I take
the kernel which for me
is sustenance that intercepts
the curved intensity.

For what I give, from what I take,
counterpoint of need,
the bread is source, the kernel core,
the legacy is seed.

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by SHELDON ZITNER

The Rose and the Sun

From leaf to thorn the sunlight goes,
Trying the merits of the rose,
  Trembling to touch
Its sudden barb, its crisp, red nap,
Its virile bone, its dusty pap;
  But out of reach,
The gnarled and primal rose is spun
Through the red slag of the primal sun,
  Each controlling each.

✪ LOUISE TOWNSEND NICHOLL has published five books of poems, the most recent being her *Collected Poems*. Miss Nicholl received the $5,000 fellowship award from the Academy of American Poets for the year 1954.

✪ DAVID MORTON, formerly professor of English at Amherst College, is now living in the Azores, where he continues to write and teach. His new book, *Like A Man in Love,* was awarded a Borestone Mountain Poetry Award.

✪ Poems by HANNAH KAHN have appeared in *Saturday Review, Voices* and the New York *Times*. Another of her poems was published in the Winter, 1953-54, issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

✪ SHELDON ZITNER, who appears for the first time in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, teaches at Hampton Institute. He is now at work on a book of monologues in verse and a study of the Restoration theatre.

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If You Don't Mind My Saying So . . . . . .

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

Ours, so they say, is a world ready at last to "face the facts." Actually this has been the Age of Euphemism much longer than it has been the Age of Anxiety, and the softeners are still at work. Even in my childhood "graveyard" had already become "cemetery" and now cemetery has given way to "memorial park," because any euphemism ceases to be euphemistic after a time and the true meaning begins to show through. It's a losing game, but we keep on trying.

Highbrow prejudice notwithstanding, the Latins also have long played the game. What we call a "brassiere" (literally "shoulder strap") the French call "soutien-gorge" or "neck supporter." Then, having used up that innocent anatomical feature with French illogicality, they were compelled to call a neck cover a "cache-nez" or "nose hider." And haven't they, as well as we, tried to fall back upon foreign words only to discover that they don't remain obscure very long: as in the case of the once so elegant "water closet," which now sounds a bit crude even to them? Since we reciprocated by calling the same necessary piece of plumbing by their name for a lady's costume, it is not surprising that a departing French diplomat is said to have astounded reporters by telling them that the thing which had impressed him most in the United States was the ladies' toilets.

So far as I can see, we Anglo-Saxons have reversed the trend only in connection with the sexually significant features of anatomy. We were pretty proud of ourselves for getting back to "legs," and a little later we were equally proud of discarding "bosom" for "breast." If "rooster" still comes more naturally to most Americans than "cock," that is only because they are not sufficiently aware of the euphemism to get any kick out of changing back. But though we face the facts of sex we are more reluctant than ever to face the fact of death or the crueler facts of life, either biological or social. We feel that the poor will be happier if we refer to them as "people in the lower income brackets," and there are many worse examples.

Only this morning I read in a Tucson newspaper the headline: "Special Classes for Exceptional Children." "That," I said to myself, "is an encouraging development," and I had read well into the article before I realized that "exceptional" meant "exceptionally dumb." Or, if my phrase sounds too brutal, then "retarded," though that term was itself once a euphemism, since it suggests, contrary to fact, that the retarded usually catch up in time.

Most of these euphemisms, I will be told, are not prudish but merely kindly. And so they are. In all seriousness I believe that Americans are the kindliest people who ever lived. I believe, moreover, that they show their kindliness in many important ways. But I am compelled to add that sometimes we just don't seem to have much sense. Out of pure kindness of heart we butter our horses' hay. A story used to be told (in the days before dialect stories were frowned upon as transmitters of "offensive stereotypes") about a Negro youth who read on a gravestone the legend: "I am not dead but sleeping." "Boy," he said to himself, "he ain't foolin' nobody but hisself." Whom, I wonder, are "memorial park" and "exceptional child" supposed to fool?

The "Rock of Ages" used to suggest God. Now a nationally known manufacturer (vile phrase) uses it as the brand name for a highly touted tombstone, although the aged couple which is often shown contemplating it with something very like longing is never allowed to more than hint at what it is. There are a lot of delicate phrases about "eternal granite" and "not being forgotten," but no one comes right out and says what the huge block of polished stone is for. And here, as usual, commercial enterprise exploits squeamishness for profit. "Ye who

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went through life banishing B.O. and tattletale gray! Ye who showed off your furnaces, your linoleum, and your water closet bowl to envious neighbors! Ye who are numbered among the one out of five who shave every day and who demand the best! You wouldn't want to be buried under any old tombstone would you? Go at last to some dignified funeral home. Let some well-known mortician superintend your last journey to a Memorial Park and rest under a Rock of Ages. Only one out of ten can afford it. Well may that one exclaim, 'O death! where is thy sting?' "

The present discourse started out to be a cheerful, inoffensive little piece. It is growing lugubrious; but we might as well risk going the whole way. Have you visited your undertaker recently? If you have not you would probably be surprised at how his vocabulary continues to grow and how dreadfully he oozes euphemisms. Also, at how much you can be expected to pay for all this delicacy. Middle-class establishments now keep in stock "caskets" (and what is a casket except a coffin ashamed to give its real name?) of a sort only gangsters used to fall for and which are priced as high as eight thousand dollars. For a mere ten or twelve hundred dollars you can get a wooden one elaborately fussed up with padded satin, and if you peep at the blue ribbon pinned on it you may read the legend: "Styled in Sun Valley"—presumably the ski resort. Meet Mr. Alyosius Throttlebottom, America's best loved casket styler. For a consideration he would probably whip up an original for you.

And don't think you can beat the racket by being cremated. Since cremation became respectable it has also become elaborate and expensive. In many states the undertakers' lobby has seen to it that you have to have a "casket" to be burned in. At the same middle-class establishment where the Sun Valley creations were exhibited you could get a flimsy box of kindling wood for as little as a hundred and fifty dollars, but it is not much to look at; and if you want to avoid the sneers of the mortician you cannot get off with less than six hundred. And do you know what the residuum to be put in a brass "urn" is now called? "The cremains." Dust to dust, ashes to ashes, and the cremains to a memorial park. All this is supposed to maintain the dignity of death. Or is it the dignity of undertakers? Nowadays we are not brave but vulgar in the infamy of our nature.

A few days ago I brought up the subject with my doctor. He smiled grimly and said that he had recently told an undertaker to go to hell when the latter had protested to him: "Your father was a man of some dignity in this community. It does not become you to haggle over the price of his casket." But the doctor was not very encouraging when I asked him what instructions I might leave to prevent the playing of any of these farces with my mortal remains. I was lucky, he said, to live in Arizona rather than California. Here the cremains may still be buried in your back yard. In California they have to be consigned to a memorial park. So far as he knew, the only people in Tucson exempt from the necessity of submitting to various indignities are the poor Papago Indians on the reservation near by. They can get a special license to bury their own dead if they do it quickly enough. I am thinking about applying for adoption into the tribe.

Logan Pearsall Smith once remarked that neither religion nor philosophy had ever made it easier for him to face the inevitability of death. The only thing which had ever done so was the splendor of the words which great writers have found when they discuss it. Though he had no hope, it was some compensation to share in a greatness. But if the morticians have their way, that consolation is not likely to be provided again. Gray could hardly have composed an "Elegy Wrote in a Memorial Park." Neither could Cleopatra have said, "The bright day is done and we are for the Funeral Home."

I am more ready to admit than I used to be that Rabbi Ben Ezra may have been half right. Still, aging does bring its own annoyances, and I have met one of them just now. Those of us who have to admit that old age is breathing down the backs of our necks can no longer mention death without self-

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consciousness. Even to talk about joining the Papagos makes me wonder if I am getting morbid. *A fortiori* I can't feel sorry about a friend who dies without asking myself if it is really he that I am sorry for. "What really troubles you," so I say to myself, "is the realization that it is for you the bell tolls." I can't even congratulate myself on my seeming good health without remembering that among all the famous last words none is better known than "I never felt better in my life."

So far I purge no amber gum and my hams are not too noticeably weaker. It is only these intimations of mortality that get me down. Not even looking into the mirror makes me *feel* old. And for the first time I recognize fully the significance of a familiar observation: One's contemporaries don't seem older though the young seem younger. Forty looks thirty, thirty looks twenty, and I would hate to tell what twenty looks like. But the young are not fooled. They are struck dumb with astonishment when some fatuous elder happens to remark that he "feels young." "How," they ask themselves, "can he?" In another twenty or thirty years they will know. I only hope they will regret then that they called me "Sir" so contemptuously.

Statisticians keep telling us that there are going to be more and more old gaffers and dames hanging loose on society. Bright young "counselors" are talking more and more about how to keep us amused and "adjusted." "Gerontic" has become a fashionable word because it is a little less harsh than "senile," because, in fact, the analogy between it and "exceptional child" is uncomfortably close. But it is also, if anything, more lofty and condescending. Moreover, those who are planning our future seem to have especially in mind those of us who are able to find shuffleboard and bingo quite enough to live for. Perhaps that really does take care of the greater number. But not quite all. Shouldn't there be a textbook which might be called *Gerontology for the Intellectual*?

I don't mean merely a collection of platitudes about keeping up one's intellectual interests and sharing the problems of the young. I mean one which would, for example, discuss what kind of intellectual interests the aged really can keep up with and what attitudes, dubious perhaps in youth, are quite permissible to them.

Naturally I wouldn't have brought this subject up if I hadn't thought I had a contribution to make—and I have. Don't, say I, fight too hard against the growing conservatism which seems to come naturally. It's perfectly all right for the aged to believe in the good old days—social, moral and artistic. Don't think it is smart to say that youth is always right. In the first place, youth isn't always right; and in the second place, it puts you in an awful hole to say so, especially since the young are so sure of it anyway. An occasional suspicion that somebody else may know better is very wholesome for them.

Don't try to assure anybody, not even yourself, that you are keeping up with the latest intellectual fashions and that you share the contempt of present-day youth for the gods of your own younger days. You ain't fooling nobody but yourself. The old fellow who tries too desperately to keep in the intellectual swim is almost as ridiculous as the one who tries to learn the latest steps, and is hardly more out of place in a night club than he is at an *avant-garde* concert. Our fathers waltzed while we did the fox trot. There is every reason why we should fox-trot while the young dance the mambo —or whatever has come along since.

So far as I am concerned I admit freely that I have less patience than I used to have with *Sturm und Drang*, with apocalytic visions and descents into hell. Flowers of evil are less attractive, and the fact that a new book is described as "devastating" no longer makes me sure that I want to read it. I make no bones over the fact that I like Dickens better than Sartre, or *The Marriage of Figaro* better than *Wozzeck*. Melancholy, sickness and despair have long been recognized as congenial to youth. It is cheered by such adjectives as "uncompromising," "grim," "revolutionary," "tortured," "decadent" and "decayed." Youth can stand it, physically and spiritually. But the old need

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cheerfulness and health and hope. Even, perhaps, common sense. Without these, they are nothing. It may be, even, that they should admire the virtues.

When the truism begins to seem more important than the paradox we are getting old, which to the young means also fatuous and feeble. Perhaps if we were young our present convictions would be. Truisms are harder to understand and understanding them takes time. Perhaps the platitude really is false until it has been rediscovered. And perhaps when we return to it, it is not because we are senile but merely because we really have rediscovered it. A merely brilliant old man is a sad spectacle. Even the preternaturally young G.B.S. showed at last signs of becoming one. Some of his last attempts to be shocking were merely foolish. And they made one of his long-time admirers wish that he would say a few obviously true things before he died. Most of us can't help changing our opinions as we get older. Who knows? Sometimes we may even be righter than we were before.

Apropos of nothing, let me take advantage of a few remaining lines to pass on for the benefit of all husbands, young or gerontic, a remark made recently by a middle-aged individual. His wife had just returned from one of those forays across the border highly popular with Southwestern wives who return loaded down with Mexican knick-knacks. This husband was looking sadly at his spouse's haul spread over all the tables and chairs of the living room. "It's amazing," he said, "the things women would rather have than money."

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR enters its twenty-fifth year with the forthcoming Winter issue. This number will be a special one, devoted to an appraisal of the present human situation.

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WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE AMERICAN NOVEL?

An American Scholar Forum

This is the stenographic record of a discussion held at a private residence in Manhattan on Tuesday evening, July 26, 1955. Present were the following persons:

STEPHEN BECKER
SIMON MICHAEL BESSIE
RALPH ELLISON
ALBERT ERSKINE
JEAN STAFFORD
WILLIAM STYRON
HIRAM HAYDN

MR. HAYDN: We are gathered here, as you know, ladies and gentlemen, to discuss the question "What's wrong with the American novel?"

I think when I invited each of you I told you at the time that it was quite possible that this discussion might be printed under the title, "What's right with the American novel?" but there is a reason for beginning with the negative proposition, and that is that I particularly wanted to have in the group tonight some of the outstanding younger American novelists, and at least several of the younger outstanding editors in the book publishing field, because the elder statesmen have been heard a great deal, whether as practitioners or as critics or in whatever relation to the subject.

Some of you, to be sure, have been heard and heard extensively, but not, to the best of my knowledge, in an expository fashion.

One little footnote first: We say the question concerns the American novel. I see no reason why the discussion shouldn't include the contemporary novel in other countries as well, but I do hope that we can keep it primarily concerned with the American novel.

I said a moment ago that I started this with the negative question for a real reason.

I have read or heard or overheard a great many times during the last few years the statement, with varying degrees of intensity and heat, that the American novel at present is not very distinguished.

I have heard it said that the American

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✪ ALBERT ERSKINE is managing editor of Random House.
✪ JEAN STAFFORD is the author of novels and books of short stories, including *Boston Adventure* and *Children Are Bored on Sunday.*
✪ WILLIAM STYRON is the author of *Lie Down in Darkness.*
✪ HIRAM HAYDN is editor of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

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novel reached its most recent peak in the twenties, and that when the generation of Dreiser and Anderson had had its day, we had seen the end of our "golden period," so to speak.

I have heard that statement extended another generation, with the opinion that after Hemingway, Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe, Fitzgerald and Dos Passos, we have had nothing to equal them.

I have heard animadversions of this sort against the contemporary novel: that we have now really only two general kinds of American novels. One is a popular kind, read by a great many people, which is essentially reportorial. Frequently the word "reportorial" is used with derogatory intent; it is said scornfully that our novelists come out of journalistic or correspondent backgrounds; that many of them are graduates from *Time* magazine and *Life* magazine, and that this is reflected in their work which is highly competent, but somewhat—if not wooden—at least slick and highly polished; that they lack substance, density, texture, thought, vitality. The other group of our novelists, it is said, are those who are in perhaps a more traditional sense interpreters or critics of life, of the main arteries of human experience. It is claimed that they have come to be mandarins; that they write only for themselves and a few others; that they largely coexist in academic circles; that they have lost touch with the main currents of our times and have little or nothing to say to more than a small audience.

Now, as a matter of fact, I have heard many other, and some even worse things said. So it seems to me there have been enough charges of this sort to warrant putting our question, if not "What's Wrong with the American Novel?" then "Is There Anything Wrong with the American Novel?"

Would someone like to speak to one of these points?

MR. BECKER: I will speak to two of them at once. Mike and I have already had fifteen minutes on them at dinner. I started to think about this a couple of days ago.

It seems to me that part of the problem is not the fact that the American novel itself has declined, but that the novel has ceased to be what its public used to expect.

The point I make is that in the old days —before Dickens, let's say—there was a class of people who could write and could read within a kind of common frame of reference, so that the artist's excellence was understood as excellence, what he said was understood, and everyone who read books at all knew enough to interpret them and to apply them to his own life.

Nowadays, we have fewer and fewer people interested in what is done in a literary sense, and more and more people interested in what can help them practically or what will ameliorate their everyday life.

MR. HAYDN: Do you mind if I interrupt before the second point, just for a moment, on this one?

You speak of an audience that was there, a knowledgeable audience which read and wrote, and you suggest the period before Dickens. I suddenly wondered how old the novel is. As we know it, it began perhaps a hundred years before Dickens in England.

MR. BECKER: About that, yes.

MR. HAYDN: And this goes back to Defoe, is that right? And then you have Fielding, Richardson, Smollett and Sterne and a host of minor novelists up to Scott, Jane Austen, and so on.

I'm not really challenging what you say. I am just wondering whether we should take this for granted, whether this audience matter applies specifically to the novel at that time, or rather to other literary circles.

Of course we know that statistical, quantitative literacy has increased enormously. Now the question is, is there really no longer a qualitatively literary audience in your sense?

MR. BECKER: No, I won't say that at all, but I will say that of the people who read nowadays a smaller percentage cares for the serious novel than the percentage of people in 1790 or 1820.

MR. HAYDN: I'm sure a smaller percentage, but you mean more than that, don't you? You mean a smaller number?

MR. BECKER: No, I don't mean a smaller

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number. There were fewer people reading in those days than read now.

But my second point may throw a little light on this. I think when you talk about the reportorial writers you get close to what people want to read nowadays, what people do read.

There is a whole slew of badly thought out novels, of witness books, of good or bad nonfiction, which seems to mean more to people, possibly because back in the old days there was a certain series of factors that the novel had to reflect or explain that we don't have now.

I am borrowing from Malraux's thesis about art when he says that in medieval times there was a common knowledge that was so restricted that any symbol in any painting was understood by anyone who looked at that painting, and nowadays in modern art you don't have that. There are hundreds of splinters; and the same thing may be true in literature where people read what concerns them most immediately, but are not concerned with broad generalizations, with the basic facets of life that the novelist concerns himself with. Nonfiction largely has become of greater importance to people who read. The novel has become more and more entertainment and less and less guidance or art.

MR. HAYDN: Now there are two or three things from what you said there that I'd like to follow up.

MR. BECKER: By the way, I would like to be challenged successfully on this thing. I don't like to be pessimistic.

MR. BESSIE: The implication is that I didn't challege it before at dinner, but that isn't so.

MISS STAFFORD: I wonder if you were talking about the novel or the decline of the audience.

MR. BECKER: For the novelist to be alive, you have to have some sort of an audience to keep him alive. Let me say right now that I think the people Hiram referred to are dead wrong when they say that the novel is not now what it used to be. For every one man who could write English well with some grace and some style fifty years ago, there are ten now.

MR. HAYDN: When you say that the novel has never been anywhere near as good as it is now, are we limiting it to the American and maybe the English novel?

MR. BECKER: For simplicity's sake, yes.

MR. HAYDN: I think of about seven or eight giants in the nineteenth century that we have to go a way to match yet, but most of them are not American or English.

MR. BESSIE: Can I pick up from that for a minute, because I think, before we get into that too far, we ought to discuss or agree or disagree on whether or not the novel is in that shape. We ought to go back to the subject of whether it's wrong or right.

We have had a lot of writing and opinion on the decline of the novel in America and elsewhere, and it struck me that the thing that is most impressive about this is that there are two things thought of when people say this:

That novels, for some reason or other, don't seem to be selling as well as they used to. That's the audience that you want to get at.

I think there's another thing that enters into this judgment when it is voiced. This goes back to what Hiram said, that there isn't any general agreement on a commanding figure to succeed the generation in America of, let's say, Hemingway, Faulkner, Dos Passos, Fitzgerald.

You get a group of people in a room talking about the novel and they are likely not to find anybody after that generation on whom they agree as a "naturally" first-rank figure in the American novel.

I think you have to agree on that before you can get into what's wrong with it. You have to agree on whether or not you think the novel has declined.

I happen not to. I happen not to believe that, for example, the sale of the novel in the large, which really means the reading of the novel, is off. I don't believe that, and I haven't seen figures that could show it.

MR. ERSKINE: I could prove the opposite very quickly.

MR. BESSIE: That more people are reading novels? That's right, I think you could. So the audience—I think at least quantitatively, which doesn't get at what you

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were saying directly, but it begins there—quantitatively has increased. I think maybe you disagree with me, but I don't think novel reading can be shown statistically to be off.

MR. HAYDN: Isn't there something that ought to be said right here? Probably Steve Becker was not saying that not so many people were reading novels, but that he didn't believe there was as much of an audience now for what will again require a definition—the serious novelist.

MR. BECKER: That's right.

MR. ELLISON: That's so.

MR. ERSKINE: Steve said so many things, but in talking about the pre-Dickens era and mentioning the time around 1790 and following, he said that there was a group of people of considerable size who had the equipment to appreciate the artistic virtues of a good novel. This is something that I would question a great deal.

MR. HAYDN: So would I.

MR. BECKER: I didn't say "of a considerable size."

MR. ERSKINE: I don't think they ever thought in terms of good and bad novels, because as I remember the record, there was not much discussion at that time of what is a "good" novel—the sort of high-powered analysis that we are accustomed to.

MR. BECKER: I didn't mean to say that there was a large audience, but the audience was homogeneous intellectually, in the sense that if you read books at all—I am floundering now a little bit.

MR. BESSIE: Do you think the novel has declined?

MR. BECKER: No, I don't think so. You are being terribly blunt in cutting the whole conversation short. No, I don't think so.

MR. BESSIE: I think we ought to try to get that one, because this is the basic thing, isn't it?

MR. HAYDN: Gentlemen, one thing at a time. This is the basic thing, but one way is to creep around it and surround it, and the other way is to give it a frontal attack.

MR. BESSIE: It will repel it so fast that we will be routed in no time if we give it a frontal attack.

MR. ELLISON: Isn't it possible that the novels of the Dickens period and of the nineteenth century and even of the early twentieth century—isn't it possible that these books, aside from their high artistic qualities (most of which we have assumed, though Dostoevsky and some of the other giants never did succeed in writing what we call a perfect novel) expressed a sense of wonder which gave the audience, a great part of it being the ordinary newspaper reader, a grasp of contemporary change; a sense of wonder arising out of the multiplicity of events being reduced to form; a sense of discovery?

MR. HAYDN: Well, at the same time, certainly some of those same generations gave the opposite effect, gave with great intensity the sense of what was familiar—say, *Madame Bovary* and *Fathers and Sons.*

MR. ELLISON: But the *newness* within the familiar, it was discovery in that sense, a leap from the known to the unknown. Otherwise the reader would not have had a connection with the newly revealed aspect of reality. *Madame Bovary* became *bovarysme.* It named a situation which, although familiar, had never been so well defined before.

We don't manage to do that so often.

MR. HAYDN: I wish you would elaborate that. I don't think I fully understand it.

MR. ELLISON: Maybe I don't myself. All right. Any day I may walk down 125th Street, say from 8th Avenue on over to Lenox or Fifth, I can see people gesturing wildly on the street; I can hear wild political statements; I can see dope addicts; I can see people acting out wild fantasies; I can see people clinging to rural ways in a hopped-up, whirlwind industrial environment; I can see youth gangs acting fantasies of violence.

Of course, I can do that on 6th Avenue and 42nd Street, too.

I can see clashes of taste in dress, music, religion, morals—everything.

I see a whole chaotic world existing within the ordered social pattern—with the cops on the corner, the busses running on schedule, the subways on schedule, and so forth—everything that it takes to keep a

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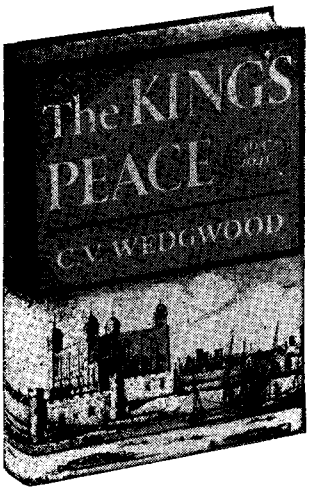

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big city operating—and I can see a million contradictions to that order.

I can see all the details of experience which we pass by daily and never stop to define; or, when we do, we attempt it only in sociological terms which cut the heart out of it. As far as the individual man who is caught up within this experience is concerned, he is living out the chaos within the recognized order and though he might be only vaguely aware of it his sense of reality is affected. He is more apt to get a sense of wonder, a sense of self-awareness and a sharper reflection of his world from a comic book than from most novels.

MR. HAYDN: Let me ask you this to see if I understand.

It seems to me that you are saying that we fail to see and communicate to readers, now, all sorts of new things in your sense, which have not been examined by most readers. But it seems to me that the emphasis ought to be rather on the fact that the first-rate novelist has always had a capacity to convey his own peculiar vision of what is not necessarily new, but—because it's his unique vision—which makes new insights for the reader.

MR. ELLISON: But don't do violence to what I am saying.

MR. HAYDN: I don't mean to. I'm just trying to find out. Is that what you mean?

MR. ELLISON: Not simply the new, but the undefined: those areas of experience which have not been written about—not that they aren't familiar; they have been lived over and over and over again.

MR. HAYDN: Excuse me, that is what I thought you meant, and maybe I haven't made clear what I mean, which is that I don't think it matters very much whether anyone has ever written about the particular sequence of chaoses that you were describing earlier; that what rather matters is that the writer himself has the original vision to bring his own particular and, therefore, new insights to material which may have been written about hundreds of times, but which is always shifting, always changing, always new when a new intelligence comes to bear upon it.

MR. ELLISON: Well, yes. But now we have a kind of competition with the novel. That is, as I get it, in the early days when the novel came into being (and before it became super-conscious of itself as an art form), society had begun to shift, and the novel was about these new things which were happening so fast that men needed to get an idea of what was simply temporary and what was abiding, what was valuable and what was destructive. Society was new and the form was new, so the writer could work from two approaches. He could concentrate on the development of the novel as a literary form, and he could describe the new processes of society, the emergence of new personality types.

So Balzac could describe how fortunes were made and how careers were made, how newspapers operated. A writer could deal with all of this as process and have people read it with a sense of discovery. They could say, "Yes, this is how it is!" because by describing it the novelist had made it real; he had snatched reality from chaos.

But it moved much more slowly than our reality. I mean when you jump to the United States, say after the Civil War, things just go a mile a minute; and it's been possible, after Melville and Twain and that crowd, to make a fairly great novel without touching one-tenth of the new experience in this country, or even the day-to-day experience. Where the earlier novel could deal with the new fairly easily, could see the emerging pattern and describe it and be satisfied, our twentieth-century writers were bombarded by change and they restricted their range. Where Balzac took on a whole society, they settled for a segment.

That is, when Melville wrote *Moby Dick* whaling was a great industry. He could start by describing this industrial process and take off from this into realms of symbolism, metaphor, philosophy and what not, and give you that tremendous sense of discovery which lies within the familiar. And he could do it and get in all the racial and social and cultural types, too; all the divers peoples which make the country so exciting.

However, Hemingway wrote for years and

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years, and wrote well, *I* think, and so what? How many of our divers peoples could really move into his early work?

MR. BESSIE: You've got to explain that last thing a little bit, because I got you up through Melville, although I'll argue with you about it, but where's the Hemingway point?

MR. ELLISON: Well, the Hemingway point is this: that here was a concentration mainly upon technique. Here was a concentration upon the revolution of the word, and here was the delineation of a philosophical attitude which expressed what many people, what many Americans felt in the aftermath of the First World War. A statement of disillusionment given style.

This defined reality for them and defined their predicament, but even while this was being praised, reality was ripping along. What happens?

The depression comes. Attitudes change and men who only a few years before had seen themselves in the image of the Hemingway hero looked around for other images of themselves. Hemingway had his style and his mastery to keep him going; but when I came here in 1936, I found many literary reputations dead which had been very much alive, say, in 1935, when I was still in the South.

MR. HAYDN: Excuse me, let me just try to summarize here a moment. I see one link between what you've been saying and what Steve was saying.

You both seem to be saying that you feel that there has been a failure of audience.

MR. ELLISON: No. There has been a failure of writers.

MR. HAYDN: Well, then I've discovered one thing. One of you says a failure of audience and one of you says a failure of writers, but both of you are talking in quite different terms and idioms about one generality, if I quote you right, and that generality is this:

The whole complex of life in our time is so much more fragmented, so much more, as Thomas Wolfe would call it, "many-footed," maybe; so much more manifold,

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there is so much more obvious diversity, that it is very difficult—says which of you?

MR. BECKER: Possibly both.

MR. HAYDN: It is very difficult for an audience to have the sense of rapport, to take only one example, with the context of symbolism within which a particular artist may work, for one thing; and that, on the other hand, you, Ralph, are saying that you feel that the artist has failed to take advantage—

MR. ELLISON: That's right.

MR. HAYDN: (Continuing)—of what you find to be the manifestly new facets of life in our time, and hence doesn't convey a sense of them to his readers, or doesn't find that audience which is searching for new ideas, new experience, new expression of that experience, within this form.

MR. ELLISON: Yes, we continue to write the books which should have be written ten or twenty years ago.

MR. STYRON: And may I say this: that I think that a large part of what you were talking about concerning the early writers —the Sternes, the Smolletts, and so on—was simply that they were often writing something equivalent to pure entertainment.

It seems to me that we simply have nowadays just too much competition with the novel.

MISS STAFFORD: What's the competition?

MR. STYRON: We have television.

MR. ELLISON: I don't mean that.

MISS STAFFORD: Sociologists.

MR. ELLISON: Sociologists and everything; and events themselves are so much more momentous than they were in those relatively placid times.

MR. STYRON: Events are momentous, and one sees these events in moving pictures and on television. I think that fills in a huge gap which novels used to fill, but very rarely do any longer.

MR. HAYDN: This may also relate to the reportorial tradition.

MR. STYRON: Yes.

MR. ELLISON: Yes, isn't this only because novelists want to compete? I mean, after all, we start writing sociology. We went through the phase in which everything had to be psychoanalyzed. And that has really nothing to do with fiction.

MISS STAFFORD: What happens is that we become so inhibited, we are so afraid that we won't parse medically or sociologically.

MR. HAYDN: Let me put a general proposition to you, just something to knock over, because this will do something that Mike suggested a while back; it will at least bring the focus back on "Is the novel worse or better, or for the most part unchanging in this sense: the same proportion of good, the same proportion of bad?"

The only way we can get at this, perhaps including the point that Steve made when he was talking about the *serious* novel, is to attempt a definition. So let me set myself up as a clay pigeon, and say that a novel is a long story which contains a certain number of characters and various elements of conflict, usually having a beginning, a development, and a climactic culmination.

I'm not ready to be knocked down yet. Now, before I get at the serious novel, let's say that there is a kind of novel which, however expert or competently done in whatever terms, is primarily intended or is almost exclusively intended for entertainment and/or inspiration on a relatively superficial level—suppose we include the excitement of the mystery, and so on.

Then I offer you this for the serious novel as something just to knock down: that the concern of the serious novelist is always to extract—no, that's a bad word, "extract"—is always to find and express what is peculiarly and continuingly human in whatever experience he chooses to record.

Now, that sounds awfully vague, I guess, but I mean it as against the sociologist who is concerned basically in finding what certain large tendencies among human beings are, against the reporter whose attempt is to present the more or less precise facts of a given event, against the function of a psychologist or clinician who is attempting to discover body, mind, or whatever you want to call it, relationships, which could have been the cause of particular actions, and so on.

The novelist is concerned with the basic

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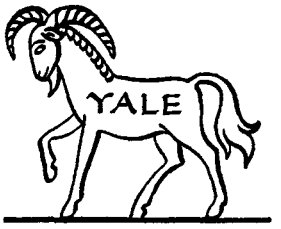

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and permanent human relationships: to put them in the simplest and perhaps most old-fashioned way, with man's relationship to himself, to other men, to the society in which he lives, to the natural universe in which he finds himself, and perhaps to God.

Now, knock me down.

MR. BESSIE: There's too much in there to knock it down. It sounds fine to me. It's all there. I won't knock that down.

MR. STYRON: Yes.

MR. BECKER: I would add to it something that bears on what Ralph said a minute ago, that he tries to find, in the words you use, what is continuing, and to present it in some fresh way that will make its reader *aware* of the fact that it is continuing.

MR. STYRON: But just following what you started out with at the very beginning is the fact that if there is no audience to speak of, no one who cares any more for the prose expression of these relationships which you described, the novelist, at the very least, is likely to feel kind of daunted from the beginning.

MR. BESSIE: Do you think that is the case, Bill?

MR. STYRON: I think it is the case; at least it's often the way I feel.

MR. BESSIE: Let me play the devil's advocate on this, because if you feel that way, it might be quite complicated as to why you feel that way.

MR. STYRON: Of course.

MR. BESSIE: But Ralph named a book which was a spectacularly unappealing book to large numbers of people, and which failed to find an audience for years.

MR. STYRON: Namely, *Moby Dick*.

MR. BESSIE: Yes. A book which—I don't know if you like it as much as I do or not—but it would seem almost impossible for me, for somebody with any kind of serious pleasure concerned with the novel, not to read it and see that it is a very, very good book.

Well, a large number of people managed not to read that book for a long, long time, and if we are talking about the declining novel, is it declining or isn't it?

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MR. STYRON: Well—

MR. HAYDN: Just one more point, and I really hope that all of you will open up on this; that even with the qualifications made, and if you accept my definition, my purpose in giving it is to give us a working basis in getting together on the central question.

Here is some kind of yardstick by which you can answer the question for yourselves.

Do you believe that in the face, to be sure, of all the chaos and confusion and complexity and diversity, and incidentally, the great and terrific speeds with which we can cover great distances in our time, and so on, and hence become familiar with things that were most exotic a hundred years ago—in the face of all this, nevertheless, are a large number of our novelists continuing to deal with these basic human experiences in, what shall I say, in a strong, in an effective, in a stimulating—I don't know what to say—

MR. BESSIE: Satisfactory.

MR. STYRON: I think they are. I start with the end of World War II, just for convenience's sake. We have had quite a few novels, I think, which deal very strenuously with the human condition. Nonetheless, there seems to be, at least I feel, a lack of interest in these statements.

I think that people have ignored these statements.

Mike, I think you were very right about Melville, and *Moby Dick* in particular, but *Moby Dick* was preceded by, I think, two novels, *Typee* for one. And Melville was an extremely well-known entertainer.

MR. ERSKINE: It was preceded also by several others.

MR. STYRON: That's true.

MR. BESSIE: Don't let Melville stop you, because you're getting somewhere.

MR. HAYDN: You had just reached the place where you were saying that you felt there had been strong, effective and satisfying novels out of the last war, but that you felt—

MR. STYRON: Or since then. Not necessarily war novels.

MR. BESSIE: You haven't found the proper response, and by response you mean readers, not critics.

MR. STYRON: Yes, readers.

MR. HAYDN: How do you measure that?

MR. STYRON: I don't know.

MR. HAYDN: In numbers?

MISS STAFFORD: What do you mean by saying that there has been no concern?

MR. STYRON: Well, let me try to go into that.

I think Ralph's book, for instance, is a book which in another century, say the nineteenth, would have reached a much larger audience than, in proportion, it has in our time.

MR. ELLISON: That's when it should have been written. (Laughter)

MR. BESSIE: You are being suppositious, Bill; you just can't know, can you?

MR. STYRON: You really can't know, but it's just intuition.

MR. HAYDN: What I wonder is something that I have heard, really since, literally, I was a little boy, and more from American men than women: the remark, "I like to read facts"—now, I am leaving out the woman's magazine audience; I am talking about the people who might be a serious audience for this serious kind of novel—and I remember what was for me almost the *locus classicus* of this, when I was a young, ardent man sitting next to a famous clergyman at dinner, and I was so embarrassed, anyway, to be talking to him, I didn't know what to do.

Finally, I talked about what I was interested in, and asked him whether he had ever read Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*, and he said, "I have no time for light reading." (Laughter)

This is one little, tiny incident that is really symptomatic of a great many conversations that I have had a great many places, that somehow there is, I think, a very large representation of the kind of mentality in our society in our times which feels that the novel is, after all, if not light, at least somehow special, somehow for *other* kinds of people.

MISS STAFFORD: You can't read it before noon.

MR. BESSIE: That's right. It's not very long ago, if not even more recently, that the

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proper Edwardian could say, without feeling self-conscious, that somebody who was a novel reader was light-minded.

MR. STYRON: What?

MR. BESSIE: Light-minded. And the thing that fascinates me about this is that in relation to what we are talking about now, I think that if you feel that the novel in American society has declined, either in its own merits or in its audience, you have to explain something which you may not agree with, but which I feel very strongly, that the novel has a higher prestige today than at almost any other time.

That is, I think in the community it's a matter of higher prestige to be a novelist, and I think that a high accomplishment in a novel is probably as high as it's ever been.

I think the very intensity of the conversation about the novel, and the amount of just sheer attention paid to it—

MR. STYRON: What community is this? I don't mean to be facetious.

MR. BESSIE: I hoped we could stay away from present company—but there isn't anyone in this room who hasn't had a reasonably successful response—any writer, I mean.

MR. STYRON: Reasonable standards.

MR. BESSIE: That's right. I don't know what you mean when you say this sense of the audience being so far behind you that you can't feel that they are there, that you feel the absence of an audience.

MR. STYRON: I'm a great television viewer these days, because I have one.

MR. BESSIE: Because *you* have one?

MR. STYRON: Yes, because *I* have one, thank you. And I don't read novels. (Laughter)

MR. BESSIE: Because it's there.

MR. STYRON: I do. It came with the house. Take a quiz program I was watching—a gruesome one (I was looking at it, anyway) —and the M.C. asked the audience, he said (this is a new approach to a quiz program) —he asked the audience three or four simple questions, starting with: "Was Davy Crockett a real or fictitious person?" A terrific "Real!"

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"What is the capital of the United States?" "Washington."

And then, finally (it surprised me), "Who wrote *Look Homeward, Angel?*"

Well, the man who wrote the show, I don't know where he got the question, but there was an absolute dead silence, a total dead silence.

Now, admittedly, this was a simple-headed audience. It's true that they aren't novel readers.

MR. BESSIE: Who admits this?

MR. STYRON: I admit this.

MR. BESSIE: On the basis of the results?

MR. STYRON: You're cutting me too close.

MR. BESSIE: Pardon me. (Laughter)

MR. STYRON: A group of people who do not read novels.

MR. HAYDN: One question, Bill, which really, I think, is relevant to that is: Aren't we confusing something here? Aren't these the rough equivalents of the people who fifty years ago, perhaps one hundred years ago (witness all the people who waited for the new edition of some of Dickens' novels) really were not (in the sense we have defined) readers of serious novelists, but readers of novelists who were entertainers; and that Dickens had this side to him, which was what made him so popular; and that now there are other forms in which they seek that entertainment?

MISS STAFFORD: And quite possibly a similar audience would not be able to tell you who the author of that was.

MR. HAYDN: That's right.

MR. ERSKINE: They just knew what magazine it was appearing in.

MR. BESSIE: That's right.

MR. STYRON: I think in France today—do they have quiz shows in France, Mike?

MR. BESSIE: They haven't got TV yet on our scale, but they have them on radio, I believe.

MR. STYRON: You have simple-minded audiences in France, but if they were asked who wrote *Jean Christophe*, I think there would be at least seven or eight voices from the audience who would answer the name of the author.

MR. HAYDN: It is not peculiar to the immediate situation of the American novel, but to the American people?

MR. STYRON: Yes, which is the way that Steve started: that we face a rather weird 165 million deaf people, in a way.

MR. ELLISON: Let's look at it from this point of view. After all, the novel entertains, it expresses a partial vision, it celebrates a human condition, and it does all this by communicating, and it communicates on the basis of some things known and a hell of a lot that is unknown.

I am just unwilling to turn that audience over to television.

MR. BESSIE: Do you think that audience has been thrown over to television?

MR. ELLISON: I think that we are now getting away from this attitude, but I think that for much too long, American novelists have set up certain aesthetic ideals which they are trying to realize; that these aesthetic ideas and ideals came to us in the guise of certain class values, certain regional values, and certain—well, for want of a better word—national values, which very often have gotten in the way of the novelist's sense of reality. For a long time if you asked someone what an American was, he would usually describe an Anglo-Saxon of New England background—really one of many American types.

Something else has had a lot to do with the lack of communication between the novelist and his larger audience, and that is an over-investment in certain stylistic methods, a kind of snobbery of style.

But if artistic excellence is to be achieved only through a Henry James type of technique (and certainly there is artistic excellence there) to the exclusion of that great mass of experience which will not be hammered into shape by such delicate subtleties, then you are going to lose a great part of that audience.

MR. BECKER: How far would you go in the other direction?

MR. ELLISON: That the audience is without responsibility or that they have responsibility, but this is what we start with. You can't complain really about the audience.

My task is to reach them, doing the least

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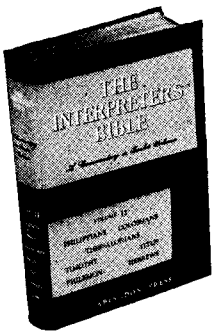

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violence to what I think are the great artistic achievements of the craft.

MR. HAYDN: I certainly like the angle you are coming in at, but I just have to say this, by way perhaps of initiating Act II, Scene 2, and it comes directly from what you have been saying.

We have talked a lot about the audience and perhaps we can summarize that later, but as far as the artist goes, isn't it true that those imaginative writers whom we have always thought of as great, to use a word which is currently not popular, at least in this sense, have meant something very real, both to the learned and to the simple; that, applying that test, I look around me and find many brilliant practitioners but relatively few who are of the first rank in having something to convey to all kinds and conditions of people.

That does not mean that I think the American novel is going to the dogs, but it does mean that I miss this kind of major voice, with a few exceptions.

This ties in, too, with something that both Steve and you said earlier, for it is mighty hard, perhaps, to grasp in any comprehensive fashion so highly complex a world as the one we live in, and to communicate your sense of it to all kinds of people. The ones who have done this the most effectively in literature, it seems to me, have come at the end of established orders, like Dante, who gave a great imaginative vision of a world order—the one you were referring to, Steve—that was really in a sense ending already, but which he could encompass, it was there to see in clarity. Only it required a great poetic talent to lift it to the quality that it had.

Similarly, in other periods, as when John Milton wrote an epic poem, the world view that that epic poem contained was familiar to everybody, to the learned and the simple alike.

You see, this gets back to where you started. Each to his own degree had some comprehension of it. I think that is true, adds some interest in it, and it is true even more certainly of Shakespeare's plays; and really epic poetry and poetic tragedies seem to me to be the forerunners of the serious

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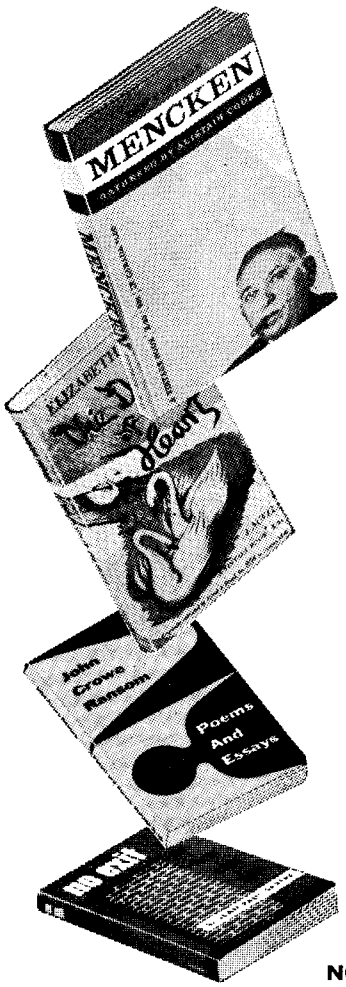

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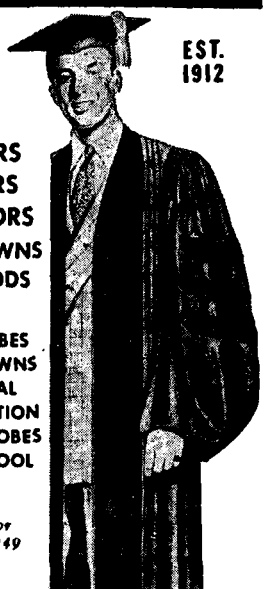

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novel, rather than romances and legends and tales in prose.

MR. ERSKINE: Well, how many people do you think read *Paradise Lost*?

MR. HAYDN: That was a poor example.

MR. BESSIE: It depends upon what you are trying to show.

MR. HAYDN: But Shakespeare is not a poor example, but, of course, he had the advantage of the stage.

MR. ELLISON: *Crime and Punishment* was published in the newspapers.

MR. HAYDN: Witness 80,000 people in Dostoevsky's funeral cortege, though probably some for the wrong reason.

MR. STYRON: I think, again, Dostoevsky was serving the place of an entertainer, as fabulous as he was.

MR. HAYDN: That's true, certainly.

MR. ELLISON: Is this a negative word, Bill?

MR. STYRON: No, because a novel has to entertain of course. I don't mean to deny that.

MR. BESSIE: If you are agreeing with what Hiram is suggesting, that this is a distinction that ought to be made—

MR. HAYDN: Which is that?

MR. BESSIE: Between entertainment and the serious novel.

MR. HAYDN: I would like to check that, because I meant only that there were all these different kinds which were written almost exclusively for entertainment. I didn't mean I didn't think the serious novel was written for entertainment, too.

MR. ERSKINE: When you were setting up your definition for us to shoot at, I thought you were introducing a wider range between them.

MR. HAYDN: I didn't mean to, but I neglected to say this other half.

MISS STAFFORD: It hasn't changed. Its intent is still to teach and to delight.

MR. HAYDN: But there are all kinds of teachings, and that's why I threw in that little side comment about "inspiration" with the entertainment for the lighter kind of novelist—because he, too, feels that he is teaching.

MR. BECKER: You've got hold of a big

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point here, teaching and delighting. I'm sure a lot of us are delighted by books which are in spots incomprehensible to many people.

I'm thinking of *Ulysses* now, for example. There are great gaps in my literary education. I know practically nothing about the nineteenth century. I have read *Ulysses* five times. Each time I feel more intrigued.

I can't conscientiously recommend it to everybody, but it's edifying, it's entertaining, I laugh like hell, I think it's a wonderful book, and where are you going to draw the line?

MR. BESSIE: Why draw a line?

MR. BECKER: Because if you don't draw a line, then you are putting *War and Peace* which, in the sense of words, is entirely comprehensible to anyone who wants to put in the time necessary to read it, in the same category with *Ulysses* which requires, for example, some knowledge of mythology.

MISS STAFFORD: *Ulysses* is *sui generis.*

MR. BECKER: That belongs to the discussion, too, somewhat.

MR. HAYDN: It's very special, even as Rabelais was, really. I mean if we don't read Rabelais, we don't know that, but if you do read it, you know that it, too, requires a special sophistication in much the same sense that *Ulysses* does.

MR. BESSIE: With this small distinction, which I would like to make: I would encourage the imitation of Rabelais and I would hope to be given the power to discourage the imitation of *Ulysses.*

MR. HAYDN: In the strict sense, Mike, discourage both imitations. If emulation, that's a different word—

MR. BESSIE: That is another session, I suppose, for another night. But the relationship of the novelist to where he comes from—

MR. HAYDN: I feel vulnerable enough about my definition of novels and great novels, but let me ask you this:

MR. ERSKINE: Don't you think that *Ulysses* has complicated the life of editors perhaps as much as anything? (Laughter)

MR. BECKER: Except its counterpart, Dr. Freud. (Laughter)

MR. HAYDN: Out of all this discussion I want to come back to one thing. I'm clear only—and then perhaps only partly—on what Mr. Ellison thinks on this question. With the rest of you I am not.

Do you believe that the serious American novel, as defined and amended, is as strong today, has approximately as many strong individual practitioners as it has had in the preceding hundred years?

MR. STYRON: I would like to answer by seconding what Steve said very early; that, if anything, the quality of the novel, it seems to me, in its depth and perception, and—to use a sort of tenuous word—universality, is greater now than it ever was. Or, at least, it has greater possibilities.

MR. HAYDN: Now, starting there, I'd like to know why.

MR. STYRON: Well, go on. All right, *I'll* go on. (Laughter) I think, for instance, that Faulkner certainly achieves a kind of greatness that no one else since Dostoevsky has achieved.

Now I am not a critic, and so I don't think I can go into analyzing my feelings, but I think he is a profound novelist. I think that most anyone who reads novels seriously will agree with that, despite all of Faulkner's faults.

MR. BECKER: I would like to pick that up, if I may. I think that it's very good that you put him with Dostoevsky and not Tolstoy, because one of the reservations that I was going to make to my previous statement that I think that novelists today do on the whole a better job than novelists in any period, is that it's more and more impossible for them all the time to reflect their entire world. They have got to do by means of examination in depth of one part of that—

MR. HAYDN: May I stick another parenthesis in here, because I know it won't belong anywhere else?

I believe that what you call universality comes from the intensity with which a particular is represented, and I put alongside these great comprehensive books—and I'm second to none in my admiration of Tolstoy—a book of the same generation called *Fathers and Sons,* which is laid in a little

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provincial setting with only three or four important characters, and the thing is so intensely and wonderfully rendered that it just spills over the sides, and I find meanings—

Well, I first read it in a town called South Euclid, Ohio, and I found meanings for South Euclid, Ohio, in that book.

Now, it doesn't at all represent all of his known world, yet by implication, by extension, it has all sorts of overtones that are tremendous.

MR. BECKER: Well, you think hard.

MR. HAYDN: Well, I'm really asking, not stating. Can't you write today about a little patch, so to speak, and render meanings that are universal or semi-universal?

MR. BECKER: Yes.

MR. ELLISON: It occurred to me that otherwise I would have to give up writing novels.

MR. ERSKINE: But you can't write about it with the particular limitations that Dickens had, or that someone a hundred years ago had, and satisfy a modern audience.

MR. HAYDN: You mean you cannot help —Well, did you mean something like this, Albert, for instance? I don't see how anyone, any novelist who is concerned with character at any depth or density can ignore the fact that Freud and all the other doctors and disciples and opponents, and whatever of psychology, psychoanalysis and psychiatry, have come along since.

We all know what mistakes some novelists have made, reading with a volume of Kraft-Ebing open on one side and one or another pundit on the other side, and written case histories instead of a novel.

MR. ERSKINE: That's one of the things I mean.

MR. HAYDN: And it's terribly important, I think, for the novelist to let whatever he absorbs of that be absorbed, but not to give it back in the terms in which he secured it.

MR. ERSKINE: Not in jargon, anyhow.

MISS STAFFORD: Well, anyhow, all they did was steal language from us.

MR. HAYDN: That's true, and all the good ones admit that.

MISS STAFFORD: The analysts wouldn't have existed if it hadn't been for the writers.

MR. ERSKINE: Let me give an example, not from the distant past, but my own reaction to reading for the first time *Winesburg, Ohio* two years ago. I found this just incredibly dull, but I could understand why at the time it was published, it might not have seemed so.

MR. HAYDN: I quite agree with your judgment.

MR. STYRON: Why do you think it's dull?

MR. ERSKINE: I don't know that I can really define that. It just seemed to me to be—

MR. BESSIE: It wasn't interesting?

MR. HAYDN: I reread it. You see, I read it years ago and thought it wonderful. Then I reread it not long ago, and it seemed to me apparent that Anderson, probably unconsciously, but anyway, that he was so aware of a mission, in the sense of breaking open the conventional, and as he thought of it, the hypocritical, and so on, that it had all the crudeness and rawness of some—it's hard to say, but I'm thinking of somebody breaking ground and his consciousness of breaking ground. It is as though he had not assimilated this way of dealing with familiar phenomena.

MISS STAFFORD: That is very true. You can't read *Main Street* now.

MR. HAYDN: And yet you can see what a lot of novelists owe to him if you read it after reading his predecessors.

MR. ELLISON: And you can see why people read it, too, because I can remember how kids used to flock into libraries to read anything he wrote.

MISS STAFFORD: Certainly.

MR. HAYDN: A few years ago, on this same sideline, I had to reread for a particular class purpose, about ten novels written in the twenties, very famous novels, and the only one, as I think I told you the other day, Mike, that stood up for me at all was *Point Counter Point.*

It is not the kind of novel that I particularly like, but it is just as strong and

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just as good, of its own kind, now, as it was then.

MR. STYRON: And not *Farewell to Arms*?

MR. HAYDN: No, not to me. But what are we saying with all this? We are saying, aren't we, that we think that in many ways the contemporary novelist has a tougher job.

MR. ERSKINE: I think that we have been talking about the novelists of the past a great deal more than we have about the ones of the present.

MR. HAYDN: That's very true.

MR. ERSKINE: But I feel that I have, and many other people have, a tendency in reading the eighteenth-century novel, say, to discount certain things in advance when we are reading them, which gives us a more charitable view of their work than we have toward contemporary novels. We expect more of the contemporary.

What Ralph is talking about, that the contemporary hasn't met the situation—we don't expect Dickens to have done this.

MR HAYDN: To have met our situation?

MR. ERSKINE: I found in rereading some of Thomas Hardy's novels not so long ago, and reading some of those that I had never read before, that I was just cringing with embarrassment, because I really like this man, but I had to say, "Well, after all, he was writing *then*."

MR. HAYDN: You are thinking of floridness and of the author intruding and of no concern for preserving the illusion, as most contemporary novelists do, through limiting their point of view to a character, and so on?

MR. ERSKINE: I don't think so much that, but I think it was partly the things which seemed naive. It seems to me, I would think—

MISS STAFFORD: Making mistakes.

MR. HAYDN: Let me ask you this: Maybe this is a comment on those novelists, but does Shakespeare seem naive to anybody?

MISS STAFFORD: No.

MR. BESSIE: Hiram, Shakespeare wasn't a novelist.

MR. HAYDN: He is to me a predecessor of the serious novelist, the imaginative writer. This is to me the heritage of the best of the nineteenth-century novels rather, as I said before, than the tales in prose narrative, and so on, that preceded them.

MR. BESSIE: I don't see what your point is.

MR. ELLISON: Isn't it—whenever these first great writers, when we reread them and they fail—isn't it a failure of eloquence really, and that's precisely where Shakespeare does not fail?

We know what's going to happen, we have read the plays many times, I'm sure most of us have. I've read most of them myself. I know what's going to happen. I know the situation.

And yet the language, the eloquence itself, is what remains and what abides.

I recently reread *Farewell to Arms*, because somehow I had a theory about it, and so I went back and reread it. Some of the guys get very, very special—anyway, I reread this book. (Laughter)

Pardon my rhetoric—but going over it again, I was very interested to see how well some of the stuff held up for me, not because I didn't know what was going to happen, and not because it hadn't been redone by Hemingway imitators over and over again, but because of the way he had done it, because of his angle of vision, and because of his own personal statement.

MR. STYRON: I agree, and that's why I cannot see why *Point Counter Point* and the novels of the twenties—

MR. HAYDN: Make some allowance for personal opinion.

MR. STYRON: I do, but I just wanted to express my own admiration of the book.

MR. HAYDN: This will probably go off the record altogether, but may I come back to your asking why did I pick this Shakespeare thing? I think that what Ralph said in a sense applies directly.

I remember the other day having some reason for going back through *Hamlet* and discovering two lines that I had never noticed before—this is the most minor kind of thing, but this had to do with the scene where Osric has come in to tell Hamlet that he must duel with Laertes and has talked all that fancy court language, and Hamlet and Horatio are commenting on him after

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he goes off-stage again—and I don't even remember which one said it, but one says, "He did comply with his dug before he sucked it." (Laughter)

This is what—250 years ago? Somebody help me on my arithmetic. (Laughter) Maybe 350 years ago. But that's all I mean.

Now, I think a lot of Hardy is naive one way and a lot of Meredith is naive another way, but still *Jude the Obscure,* as a whole, stands up for me very wonderfully.

MR. ELLISON: I can still remember the wrenching that I went through reading the stuff, when the girl has gone so far, and then begins to reject and fall back—oh, Lord, I suffered through this in *Jude the Obscure.*

MR. STYRON: I think the eloquence of a book like *The Naked and the Dead* is immense in its own way, and I certainly believe that just in that way the contemporary novel is alive and jumping.

MR. HAYDN: To me the one thing that is most exciting in a good novel is—well, there are two things really:

One is the sense of life, of vitality, of things coming to life, so that it ceases to be something I am reading and becomes an experience I am having, and I don't think that is being sentimental. I think it really does happen.

The other is the sense of the person behind the book, not intruding, but as I read on, the sense of—gosh, I think—

MR. STYRON: Authority?

MR. HAYDN: Yes, authority; but also originality in the sense of what is unique in one person.

MR. BESSIE: One person?

MR. HAYDN: That's another way of putting it. Do we have our fair proportion of them still?

MR. BESSIE: We can all give testimony on this, I suppose, because this then becomes confession. What you are saying now is, who are there among the living, or who have there been among the living (if it's the living we are talking about), at any rate, the modern American novelists, are there such?

Yes, I think there are.

MR. HAYDN: I suppose so. Well, I am not asking are there such—or perhaps I am asking that. But I'm asking also, is there a marked falling off in numbers among them?

MR. BESSIE: I would abdicate completely from making a numerical comparison.

You can say are there many or few or some; this is really in a sense what we are dealing with.

You see, I go back to what I said at the outset. We agree or we could agree upon almost any previous period as recently as twenty years ago on figures of major novelists, people who we thought were major in the sense in which Bill Styron set forth, but he attaches it to at least a pre-World War II generation.

Of those who came since, could we—of novelists—agree on any number of people who we felt were of comparable stature?

Is that the question that you are now raising?

MR. HAYDN: I think it is, Mike. I got a little lost.

MR. BECKER: Isn't it a little bit early to talk about figures?

MR. BESSIE: You mean in person or in numbers?

MR. STYRON: No, I'm talking about a person, a figure as a literary figure.

MR. HAYDN: I'll put it another way:

As year follows year in the 1950's, do you have this same sense of impact, with a fair degree of regularity—never mind about more or less? And I would like to know what everybody feels about that.

MR. STYRON: Well, what kind of impact was there in the twenties? Was Hemingway instantly conceived of as a figure?

MR. BESSIE: Two books, no; the third book, yes.

MR. HAYDN: Hemingway is alive. I'm talking about the state of the American novel. I asked the younger generation to come here, but I think we're talking about several living generations.

MR. BESSIE: If I were to answer it in general terms, I think what I would say is this: That I personally feel that there are a considerable number of people who are alive, moderately young and in vigor, whose works I have read, and of whom I feel that

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if they have not yet delivered, have produced what I consider a satisfactory work. They have the equipment and the possibility of doing so, and so I feel a sense of expectancy in that sense.

MR. HAYDN: I agree with that.

MR. BESSIE: There are a number of people of whom I feel this is true, wholly aside from the people in this room.

MR. HAYDN: The people in this room know that we think they're good or they wouldn't be here, but we agree with what you have said.

MR. BESSIE: Also, there are people who have come very, very close, if not there, to doing it, to producing a book or books which I think are as good as novels ever written anywhere.

I personally don't for a moment think that the novel is in a decline, and I don't think it's in a decline as to the figures writing it or as to the audience.

MR. STYRON: May I again address this to Ralph and Steve?

Do you feel hypothetically a sort of lesser excitement about writing than that which you might think you would feel if you were living in the twenties?

MR. HAYDN: Boy, that's a hypothetical feeling!

MR. STYRON: I know it's hypothetical, but all I'm trying to say is that there is, I think, a kind of—there was an excitement in the twenties, from what I gather in reading the literary history of the twenties, which is just not generated now—not that it's necessarily important, but that is a nagging sort of thing.

MR. ELLISON: Aren't we getting a lot about the authors all mixed up with what they were doing?

MR. STYRON: Sure.

MR. ELLISON: Yes, it was the Jazz Age, so-called, and Fitzgerald was burning the candle at both ends sometimes, and a little later on the Hemingway legend started—well, this is all very good. It caught the imagination of a lot of people.

I don't think we can put ourselves in that position, because ours is a different world. Maybe around the colleges and maybe around the *Paris Review* and so forth, you have just the same kind of excitement.

Certainly there was that kind of excitement around *Partisan Review* during—well, we'll say around 1939, before the Nazi-Soviet Pact.

When I first came here, there was a great deal of excitement. Everyone felt that the world was really spinning along, and you had quite a number of people who were considered culture heroes.

Well, theories wear out and then you have to have something else. It's a little bit more difficult now, I think, to produce a work of art, a worthwhile work of art.

MR. BECKER: This is something I wanted to say before: that my memories of the twenties are understandably vague, but it seems to me a novel which captured you in the twenties could influence you far more than a novel that captures you now.

You may admire a book immensely—

MR. STYRON: I certainly agree.

MR. BECKER: Influencing the way you live.

MR. ELLISON: It depends on who you are, too.

MR. BECKER: Your relations with your fellow man, the kind of thing you decide you want to do.

MR. HAYDN: I'm just immensely moved. I haven't been very much of a chairman. I am immensely moved to state a heresy.

I think that the most overrated novelist in the history of American novelists is Scott Fitzgerald. I think he is a competent second-rater.

MR. STYRON: I disagree.

MISS STAFFORD: I disagree heartily.

MR. HAYDN: I think if anybody asked me who has outstripped him already at an early age, I would say you have. I could name some others, too, but I certainly say you have.

I only recently read *This Side of Paradise*, and I think it is a most nonsensical, sophomoric novel.

MR. STYRON: But *The Great Gatsby* is a good novel.

MISS STAFFORD: *The Great Gatsby* is almost a perfect novel.

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MR. HAYDN: I disagree. I think it's a good novel, but it has sort of been finessed into a position which it could ill afford to have. But this is really just personal stuff, I didn't mean to throw that out.

MR. ERSKINE: I think Hemingway is even more overrated.

MR. HAYDN: He is certainly my second choice.

MR. ELLISON: For me he has had a lot more to say than Fitzgerald—definitely. *Gatsby*—fine; but Hemingway links up pretty close to Twain.

You might feel that Twain is overrated and certainly he isn't as subtle.

MR. HAYDN: Well, Ralph, show me the novel of Hemingway to stand beside *Huckleberry Finn.*

MR. ELLISON: His short stories don't do so badly.

MR. HAYDN: You know, it is not altogether irrelevant, because one of the great detractors of contemporary novels said to me just about a week ago, "One thing I would like to point out to you," he said, "the older generation has produced some very good novels, and individuals in it have produced two or three very good novels, but our new younger novelists"—he took the ones under thirty-five—"Name one," he said, "who has followed an initial first-rate book with a strong second or even third or even a fourth one."

MR. BESSIE: That's the mystery. That, I think, is very close to the mystery of the "under forty" novel.

MR. STYRON: Why is that particularly important?

MR. HAYDN: Whether he has or not?

MR. STYRON: Yes.

MR. HAYDN: Well, I don't know whether it is important, but I know that one test—I'll go this far with you—that one test of a really first-rate novelist, I should say, as against the writer of a first-rate novel, is that he should produce more than one first-rate novel.

MR. ERSKINE: Or even more than one novel.

MR. BESSIE: That's right.

MR. HAYDN: Well, a number of those he referred to have produced second novels and third novels which were, most people felt, inferior, and markedly so.

MR. BESSIE: Don't you think that there is a distinction in this respect, Bill?

MR. STYRON: I do in a sense, but I also think—Well, take for instance, Fitzgerald, whom I greatly admire. His first novel was a great success. However, it's not very good. His second novel was even worse. He had to wait until his third novel before he produced what I think is not only good but superb.

MR. HAYDN: I think you are right, Bill, that many, many novelists develop that way, only, also, in almost every generation some develop the other way, and this was what this man—I'm not saying he's right—but this is what he offered.

MR. BECKER: I think there's a reason for that, which is that a great many people these days reach the age of twenty-five or so with a very good basic equipment for writing and go through fairly serious experiences which affect them seriously, heavily, at that age, write a crackerjack novel right out of the heart, and then become "writers," and cease to consider their art.

MR. HAYDN: Also, there is an economic factor.

MISS STAFFORD: Certainly.

MR. HAYDN: There must always have been an economic factor, but I think there's a difference.

MR. ELLISON: Hemingway was writing about this in the thirties in the *Green Hills of Africa,* and he discusses just what happens. This is an American phenomenon. That is, not simply a phenomenon of the forties and the fifties.

MR. BECKER: I agree with Ralph that it is an American phenomenon, too.

MR. ELLISON: And one thing is the extreme fluidity of our society. Reality changes fast, and if you don't keep up with it, you are apt to fall into writing the same book or writing the book—I mean, writing the book which is expected of you.

MR. BECKER: Not only that, but the veriest pauper in this country can sometimes, very often, through education, make of him-

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self a good writer, and he has none of the family or the money or the assistance from outside that many European writers get, because belonging to a certain level of society they are expected to be writers, professional men.

MR. HAYDN: That certainly is one factor.

Now the other one that you raised just a moment ago, Ralph, what is expected of the writer who has produced a good first book is not unlike—I'm tired of people bringing athletic similes into every context—but, anyway, not unlike the second season of a baseball player, which is notoriously a bad season.

Somehow there is a sense of pressure. Isn't that true? I don't know. The greater amount of ballyhoo may have something to do with it, too.

MR. ERSKINE: I think that is a thing which frequently destroys people.

MISS STAFFORD: The ballyhoo you get. All that preliminary publicity.

MR. ELLISON: Your integrity is destroyed.

MR. BECKER: The greatest professionalism in the whole vocation.

MISS STAFFORD: We have the kind of thing that belongs to the stage, to the theatre, and to politics.

MR. BESSIE: Doesn't this carry a little bit back to the prestige of the novel—without trying to be too objectionable?

MR. STYRON: That is not an objectionable question at all. I think that a novelist feels that he is very definitely in competition with just what you are talking about.

MR. HAYDN: There seems to be quite a bit of prestige attached to being a novelist.

MR. STYRON: I don't object to that at all.

MR. BESSIE: If the novelist is thought of as a competitor of Jinx Falkenburg—

MR. STYRON: By whom?

MR. BESSIE: By the mass media audiences.

MISS STAFFORD: This is quite a vulgar note to introduce—you remember when *Forever Amber* came out, there was advance publicity for that book. She was built up the way Marilyn Monroe was, in exactly the same way.

MR. BESSIE: And in exactly the same places.

MR. HAYDN: Did you notice in *Publishers' Weekly* the advance notice?

MISS STAFFORD: Exactly the same reasons.

MR. BECKER: These are the eternal verities.

MR. HAYDN: The advance notice for the second book: "The theme of our advertising will be the author's picture"—that was the quotation. (Laughter)

MR. BESSIE: The solution to a harrowing problem.

MR. HAYDN: Another aspect of it appeared in the paper the other day, not with someone whose reputation needs to be made, but it was on the movie page—an advertisement of *Land of the Pharaohs* saying: "Written by that winner of the Nobel Prize and the Pulitzer Prize."

MR. STYRON: And Harry Kurnitz didn't get a nickel's worth.

MR. BESSIE: But Harry had a great experience working with a great man.

MISS STAFFORD: I'm sure no one in this room read the sequel—well, not the sequel, but Kathleen Winsor's second book, which is called *Star Money*.

MR. BESSIE: I read the first page of it.

MISS STAFFORD: I have a great appetite for trash and I read this one. It's a novel about a beautiful "clothes horse" who wrote a novel in the sixteenth century, and oh, the invasion of privacy!

MR. BESSIE: And lost love!

MISS STAFFORD: Miserable lost love!

MR. BESSIE: But had a good apartment.

MISS STAFFORD: An awfully good apartment. They drank cointreau as a cocktail.

MR. ERSKINE: I wanted to say at some point that this interests me a great deal, and I wasn't aware of this Kathleen Winsor thing, which indicates that even the writer of a most popular sort of fifth-rate novel then becomes aware of himself as a writer, and writes a book about the writer.

I have found in my manuscript reading, mostly of unpublished books—but this is true of many published books in the last twenty years—that writers are writing too much about writing and about writers and about the conflict between the writer and society.

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And I think that is one thing that is terribly wrong with the American novel.

MR. STYRON: That sounds like Thomas Wolfe.

MR. ELLISON: How many people really know about that problem and how many people have a way into it?

MR. BESSIE: Unless it applies to everything. Unless it's darn good.

MR. STYRON: Of course.

MR. ELLISON: I would like to carry on for a minute.

Here we are, really teaching writing in colleges, which is very good. I have attended classes, I mean my friends' classes. I have never taken one.

But along with that goes a kind of piety toward standards of excellence, which is not so good; so many of the people who have taken these courses will tell you that so-and-so is good, and if you say, well, so-and-so is also good, they'll say, oh, no, he couldn't possibly be that good.

This is bad for this reason—here we are around the East Coast—

MR. HAYDN: Just develop that a little more. I have missed this. Why can't so-and-so possibly be good?

MR. ELLISON: Because he wasn't called good, first by the teacher, who very often is a novelist or a famous critic who has his own theories and his own motives for having theories about what is excellent, and you get a kind of ingrown thing whereby writers write for other writers rather than writing for a big audience.

MR. HAYDN: This is one of the initial charges, you may remember, that I quoted.

MR. ELLISON: Yes, and I agree. Certainly. And this is the great wrong about it: that the whole tendency in American life, historically, technologically, statistically, and every other way, is to mix up everything.

The South is becoming industrialized. It's a great industrial frontier. They build battleships in Oklahoma, planes in Kansas.

I mean, here you have this diversity of function no longer in stable geographical locations. You have population shifts. Washington State, which had no Negroes before World War II, or had very few, now has a Negro problem, as such. Great masses of Negroes went up there during the war.

You have all these great things happening; and on the other hand, you have writers like me—though I do travel a bit, I have lived here since 1936, and I haven't made a trip out there, or to many other parts of the country, to learn exactly what is happening.

So how am I really going to communicate? I can communicate out of my own personal vision and out of my personal knowledge of that process of being transplanted and whirled around.

But time passes so fast that I could not, for the life of me, describe what's happening to my brother who went to California in 1938.

MR. BECKER: Wasn't one of your original points the fact that you can take a perfectly commonplace happening and by giving it your own fresh impetus make out of it a work of art?

MR. ELLISON: Yes, but if you aren't careful, you'll limit yourself only to people who live pretty much the same pattern that you live. And you are apt to limit your range of reference, the richness of your symbolism, your eloquence, to that group whose experience most closely matches the curve of your narrative.

One of the great pleasures of publishing a book was to have a fellow who did not read novels, who only read it because I wrote it, talk to me in terms which sounded like those of a "new critic."

The man said, "I read it; it meant this." And I went back—and you know, damn it, it meant that. Well, here was something. This was better than any favorable review that I got, because I felt that I had communicated with him.

MR. HAYDN: And that may not be the learned and the simple, but that's at least the initiated and the uninitiated.

MR. ELLISON: Yes. I just feel that we are called upon to do a big job, not because someone is going to give us a star on the report card, but because this is America and our task is to explore it, create it by describing it.

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A Frenchman has been exploring France —each French writer explores the nature of the French personality, French reality, French culture, and the universality of the Frenchman.

He can do that. He's got a small country. We've got a big country. Here it takes more doing, but it'll be new.

MISS STAFFORD: I don't see that the problem for the novelist today in America is any different from that of a novelist in any point in history.

MR. ELLISON: It is not essentially, in general, Jean, but for instance, up until 1946 you got very few people, and maybe after 1946, who considered Faulkner as a readable novelist; and certainly they did not consider him as an important or a great novelist.

Now he is recognized as such.

MR. STYRON: Even by *Time* magazine. (Laughter)

MR. ELLISON: All right, by *Time* magazine.

MR. ERSKINE: But not by the *New Yorker*.

MR. STYRON: Not yet.

MR. HAYDN: Ladies and gentlemen, we can continue this well on, and of course, you are all invited to. Many people have written in after these conversations and said it didn't seem that we stayed on the point. Yet no one has written in and objected to the digressions, because the digressions are often the heart of the thing.

Now, I would like to conclude this by going around the circle from left to right, and giving each person an opportunity, if he cares to, to say something on the central point, which is: "What is wrong with the American novel?" or "What is right with the American novel?" or both.

Bill?

MR. STYRON: May I do something very ungracious and pass to Jean? Or are you taken off guard, too?

MISS STAFFORD: Yes, I am.

MR. STYRON: Let's pass to Mr. Erskine.

MR. ERSKINE: I have nothing at this moment.

MR. ELLISON: Oh, come now, you can't do this.

MR. HAYDN: I'll start with you and come around this way.

MR. ELLISON: Well, I think that technically the American novel is far more conscious (maybe too self-conscious) than ever before.

There is a technical awareness and mastery, which has not existed so widely before.

I don't think that it has interested itself in communication of the wonder of the American experience as it might. I think we are groping toward that, and that in the younger novelists you are getting, you are *beginning* to get it.

I was quite surprised, encouraged, to talk with writers, publishing writers, who seemed to know absolutely nothing which occurred before 1940. I think there is a kind of hope in that, as well as the obvious danger.

MR. HAYDN: Thank you very much.

Steve?

MR. BECKER: I agree with Ralph that American writers are now better equipped and, in general, can turn out better books than they have ever done before.

I think that part of the difficulty lies in the changing functions of the novel, again in terms of the audience. Certain jobs that the novel used to do are now being done for far too many people by the news magazine, by television, by periodical literature in general, rather than by books which could be expected to last and to supply some sort of guidance or entertainment for some time.

I think—give me a minute.

MR. HAYDN: Take your time.

MR. BECKER: We are succeeding much more thoroughly in illuminating specific areas of experience, and the only lack that I feel, and it may not be a very serious lack at all, is in the step between specific experience and universal experience, so that too many readers may pass by the total significance of the book.

I don't know whether too few writers can feel life as a whole and write a book which expresses their vision of the whole, although there are a great many who can do a wonderful job on a small part of that thing.

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MR. HAYDN: Mike?

MR. BESSIE: Unfortunately, it gets more and more difficult to add to what's been said, because what's been said is so well put.

I think I would try to say these things: In the first place, I think that the very amount of concern with the state of the novel is an indication less of any decline in the novel, or any real problem with the novel, than it is of the sense of expectancy, a sense that the novel and novelists are perhaps about to give us—as we have had now at pretty swift intervals for more than a hundred years—extraordinary achievements in writing.

And they have come, on the whole, I think, fairly close. There have been quite a few of them, until I think that what we are really saying, all of us, is where is it? or where is he? or where is she? where is the novel? where is the novelist? or—although we think less in terms of groups and schools than we did a while ago—where is the group? That is the first thing.

The second thing, I think, is: Difficult as it is to produce a novel which, in the sense that Steve Becker says, encompasses the whole, I find it difficult to believe that this is a more difficult time to encompass than, for example, Stendhal's.

I have a feeling that the time in which Stendhal lived, to him and to the people who read him, was a time that justified that preposterous and wonderfully prophetic statement that so few novelists today would have the courage, in the face of publicity, to make, as Stendhal himself made about his own books.

I would sort of welcome a novelist today who would say of himself, not in the Henry Miller sense, but in the sense in which Stendhal said it: that this will be read in—well, you name the date.

I'm baffled, as an editor, by this sense, which God knows, Bill Styron is not the only one to have, of the separation from readers. (If I'm rephrasing it badly, you'll have a chance to do it yourself.)

I don't really understand it. I have the feeling that the writer today, that the novelist today, must be as close to his reader as

1945 - 1955

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Balzac was, and if Balzac had this sense of alienation from his reader, I fail to find it.

And I would like to know—I don't think it's our purpose now—but I would like to know why the novelist, if he does feel this, feels it. I think that the rewards of success in the novel have become disproportionate with the merits of a novel, as we seriously know it.

A successful book brings more in acclaim and rewards than the writer knows is justified. And I think that the novelist may have a small piece of the Hollywood writer's problem of getting more of something that isn't serious in its values than he knows what to do with.

The last thing I think about the novel now is the thing that I tried to say a while ago, which is that there are so many people—I couldn't begin to name them or number them—who, I think, can write good novels, and quite a number who, I think, can write very good novels, and I think, this is why we talk about the state of the novel. Where is that very, very good one?

MR. HAYDN: Thank you.

Bill, may I come around to you now?

MR. ERSKINE: Can I precede him now, because all I want to say is—

MR. HAYDN: I will ask Bill. May he precede you?

MR. STYRON: He certainly may.

MR. ERSKINE: This is no summing up.

MR. HAYDN: Is this a way of evading the summing up?

MR. ERSKINE: Perhaps. (Laughter)

What Mike was saying about the sense of separation from the audience that a lot of people who write novels today feel—I have encountered so many people through reading their manuscripts and through seeing them, who have written unpublished novels, and some who have written novels which have been published, who are proud of this sense of separation and who would not like to do anything about it at all, but who, if you publish their novel, and the separation continues to exist, are very much distressed about it.

I am distressed by the fact that so many people seem to feel that it is important to be separated from this corrupt world in which we live, and I think that this is a real problem.

MR. HAYDN: This is another echo from the initial impeachment from outside, isn't it? Only this is from the inside.

Ralph, you remember that I said a little while ago—

MISS STAFFORD: I think that certainly silences me. (Laughter)

MR. BESSIE: If you were going to say it, you've got to say it.

MISS STAFFORD: I will say this:

MR. HAYDN: Bill—

MR. STYRON: Of course, ladies first. (Laughter)

MISS STAFFORD: I don't have any sense of separation from the audience. When I'm writing I'm writing for God—

MR. HAYDN: But did Albert mean while you were writing? I don't think that he did.

MR. ERSKINE: Well, I didn't mean you.

MISS STAFFORD: Let's not let this get to be a personal quarrel.

MR. HAYDN: But you didn't mean the writer had this sense of separation while he was in the act of writing, did you?

MR. ERSKINE: I think the ones that I'm talking about have it from the very beginning.

MR. HAYDN: Have it perennially?

MR. ERSKINE: Yes. They like to think that this is too good for people to read, and then when people don't read it, they are disappointed.

MR. HAYDN: I would then like to ask you a question: How many of these are in your opinion really first-rate writers?

MR. ERSKINE: I think that some of them basically are, but they have gotten, out of the air, or somewhere, this notion. I don't know how to explain it.

MR. HAYDN: Because—

MR. ERSKINE: They like to think that they are Shelley, that they will be appreciated after they are dead.

MR. HAYDN: I think that the prime examples of this could not possibly uphold this point of view logically and still submit their books to publishers.

MR. BESSIE: Oh, Hiram, if you're going

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to be a full-time masochist, you're going to get somebody to hurt you.

MR. HAYDN: Well, all right.

MR. ERSKINE: Well, don't you know these?

MR. BESSIE: I do, indeed.

MR. BECKER: What is behind it? A great contempt for the American public?

MR. ERSKINE: Something like that.

MR. BESSIE: I don't think there is anything—

MR. STYRON: I really would like to know about that.

MR. HAYDN: I do agree with you both. I don't know. I know people who talk like that, but my God!

However, I really don't know how anyone, if you make the most modest effort to track it down, can defend this point of view, and seriously go on and submit his book to you and ask it to be published, holding his nose, and then count—well, you said this, didn't you—and then count how many advance orders you have and how many reorders you get after publication.

So that this simply annihilates the whole argument. I don't mean your argument. I mean theirs.

MR. BESSIE: This is thoroughly out of turn, but I don't think there is any particular relationship between what Bill was talking about and what Albert was talking about at all.

MR. HAYDN: I don't either.

MR. BESSIE: If Bill would say, I would be very interested personally in what he means about this.

MR. HAYDN: In spite of the resemblance that you have begun to bear to either Mr. Sherlock Holmes or to Dr. Watson, I forget which, on the trail of the notorious—well, I would like to say I don't think any of us thought there was any relation.

MR. BESSIE: I'm sure that I just wanted to get to Bill.

MR. STYRON: Will you just briefly say what you're getting at?

MR. BESSIE: The first thing that you said, which you haven't had a chance to get back to, about the feeling that the novelist today —well, you said nobody is interested in the document. Nobody is interested in what it is that he produces, the statement, or something like that.

MR. STYRON: Something like that.

MR. HAYDN: That he misses the feeling of a really interested, concerned audience.

MR. STYRON: Now, you want me to elaborate on that?

MR. BESSIE: Not if you don't want to.

MR. STYRON: I don't know precisely how to, but I'll try.

I think Steve said, at least one of the first hypotheses, was that of a missing public. Isn't that right? Or, at least the suggestion of that.

And I still feel, I mean all glitter aside, all Hollywood aside, all romance aside, that the novelist in America today is a writer who is writing to an audience which is specialized as never before; that Melville, *Moby Dick* aside, was a tremendously—he was read in—I don't know what the population of the U.S.A. was in 1850. But I would imagine that the proportion of his readers was just fantastically greater than it is now.

MR. ERSKINE: You would be wrong.

MR. STYRON: All right, then I would be wrong.

Do you mean to tell me—we will have to check on that. Disregard the Melville remarks. Nevertheless, I think the writer, at least I do, I feel a tremendous kind of—I feel I should be like the fellow who was sure to write for television some time. I really do.

MR. BESSIE: Why?

MR. STYRON: I feel that if there is a possibility to be moved by a medium, I think there's a possibility to be moved by the television medium. I don't say that I'm even going to think about being a TV writer, but if there is this possibility, why should I not write for television?

MR. BESSIE: Maybe you like words.

MR. STYRON: I love words, but then, again, there's the economic factor.

MR. BESSIE: This is a really serious point.

MR. BECKER: You always want to reach more people than you do.

MR. STYRON: Of course you do. For instance, if on a one-night program at CBS, something like that, I could reach—oh, I

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don't know how many, 14 million people—

MR. BESSIE: You can tell me what you mean by reaching.

MR. ERSKINE: Yes. (Laughter)

MR. STYRON: Well, look, the movies have done it. Why can't TV do it? I have seen movies which have moved me. Why don't I write for the movies or TV instead of books?

MR. ELLISON: Your books move people. Your works—

MR. STYRON: But if I can write in a medium, without sacrificing my sincerity and my integrity, which will reach more people, why should I not do that?

MR. BESSIE: I'll give you the answer very simply. The answer is because you don't use yourself to the extent and in the way that you want to use yourself.

MR. STYRON: How do you know?

MR. BESSIE: I know by the fact that you haven't done it. That's the only way I can know. I know an awful lot of people who have done it, and this is one of the problems—a lot of people find it not only more rewarding economically and in acclaim, and also get a sense of contact with a larger number of zeroes by talking through TV or the movies to a greater audience than they do in a novel. If this is their satisfaction, I say more power to them.

MR. ELLISON: It is not really a task, is it? I can remember reading things by Faulkner long before he was generally acclaimed, and just wishing that I could have written those things. I mean they are powerful and they are still good, and I think they'll be here forever.

MR. STYRON: I agree.

MR. ELLISON: But to have judged them on the basis of how many people were reading him at that particular time would have been unfair.

MR. BECKER: That is what he means. You are not judging. You are feeling this.

MR. STYRON: Yes, it's a feeling of a steadily declining audience, of an almost minuscule audience.

MR. BESSIE: Gee, I wonder, Bill. I think maybe it's just this other great big thing that's growing up in an area vaguely called communications.

MR. HAYDN: Well, it all depends what you mean by minuscule. There are 165 million people in the United States. I don't know how many of these are totally illiterate.

I do know that when a book sells 100,000 copies, not 100,000,000 copies, but 100,000 copies, all of us who are associated with the publishing firm that published it are jubilant in terms of what's coming into our coffers, because this is a very large sale indeed, and yet it is a very small percentage of the American population.

Now, possibly Bill means something like this; and we know, through Hooper Ratings, or whatever they call them, that the number of those who listen to a particular television show is enormously larger.

MR. BESSIE: That's right.

MR. HAYDN: So that if you care at all about the sense of the size of the audience, there is really an enormous difference.

MR. BESSIE: I agree with that.

MR. HAYDN: Ladies and gentlemen, I have seldom conducted a meeting in which I have felt more impotent to keep the train on the tracks. Begging your pardon, I would like to continue around my circle, for anybody else who would like to state his reply to that question: "What is wrong with the American novel?" or "What is right with the American novel?"

There are three people who may have given their answers, but in the course of the "backing and forthing" I'm not sure.

Bill, do you want to say something?

MR. STYRON: Well, I think Mike has done it and Steve has done it, too. I think I have sounded unduly pessimistic, and as far as I know, I will write novels for a long, long time.

And if I sound pessimistic, it's only because of the fact that television dazzles me, not because I want to write for television, but because I think there is always this very intrinsic thing of reaching people whom you might call zeroes, and maybe they are, a lot of them are, but nonetheless, reaching a lot of people.

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MR. BECKER: Thank God this isn't for the *Saturday Evening Post.*

MR. BESSIE: I was going to take the magazines out of the—take the zeroes out of the magazines. That is the most bedeviled statement I have ever heard.

MR. HAYDN: The cynicism of several commentators is going to look equally bad, but I'm going to leave it all in. (Laughter)

MR. STYRON: Anyway, I think that the kind of emotional problem affecting the novelist is this feeling that—oh, that all these tremendous, fantastic, grandiose, marvelous things that he has to say do not reach nearly the number of people that they might.

MR. BESSIE: That's right.

MR. STYRON: I think in America today it has reached a point which it has never reached before, in that sense. I'm going to keep on writing novels and I'm going to write the best kind of novel I know, but this will always be important to me, I think.

MR. BESSIE: I think it will.

MR. HAYDN: Jean?

MISS STAFFORD: Well, it may be a problem, but you have got to stick to that. I would like to say this: I don't think that the American novel is moribund. I think it's rather morbid for the novelist to discuss its morbidity.

MR. HAYDN: Albert, will you deliver the *coup de grâce?*

MR. ERSKINE: No.

MR. HAYDN: In that case I shall simply say thank you very much and Amen!

William A. James

January 28, 1893—August 3, 1955

For ten years Mr. James served THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR as advertising representative with enthusiasm and diligence. His belief that such a publication could be an effective advertising medium has been an important factor in the growth of the magazine and in its establishment on a sound financial basis.

The editor, the editorial board and the staff of the SCHOLAR wish to record their gratitude for the thought, the cheerfulness and the energy which William James brought to his work for THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

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The Reader Replies . . . . . .

The Reader Replies carries miscellaneous comments by readers and authors on various articles which have appeared in the magazine. All communications should be addressed to: The Editor, The American Scholar, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington 9, D. C., and should not exceed three hundred words in length except on request. Because of limitations of space, we cannot guarantee to print all letters received.

—Editor

Cold War Troubles

It is a pity that Mr. Langbaum's otherwise admirable essay ["Cold War Troubles at Home," AS: Summer, 1955] should be marred by some of those intemperate criticisms of liberalism now so popular in circles that exaggerated both McCarthyism and the obsession with McCarthyism.

Liberals, he writes, "are predisposed to believe (with as much chance of being right as wrong) that a Hiss, a Lattimore, an Oppenheimer must be innocent because he is a victim of investigation." What an extraordinary statement! I do not think liberals are disposed or predisposed to think Hiss innocent, though they doubtless do think that his significance has been fantastically inflated. Liberals, and, I trust, conservatives as well, are predisposed to think Lattimore and Oppenheimer innocent for the very good reason that in our system men are assumed to be innocent until proved guilty, and that both have been examined pretty thoroughly and not found guilty. The government exhausted itself, and its resources, trying to find Lattimore guilty of something, and failed; it does not require any peculiar predisposition therefore to hold that he is in fact innocent of whatever charges have been brought against him. And I do not see how any one can read the report of the Gray committee without feeling that Professor Oppenheimer comes out of it rather better than his accusers or examiners or judges.

But we read further that "the whole arduous effort of liberal thought in the past decade has been devoted to . . . building up a finely discriminated anti-Communist position." On the contrary, most liberal thought has been devoted to maintaining the gains of the New Deal, to supporting the Truman and Stevenson positions, to defending the TVA or natural resources, to dealing with problems of segregation or of housing, to strengthening the UN and a score of other things. If Mr. Langbaum really thinks that liberalism since 1945 has devoted itself purely to anti-communism he is indeed the victim of that obsession he describes. But why should he ascribe his own obsessions to liberals generally?

Henry Steele Commager
New York, New York

Communism at Home

The leading article in your Summer number is on a timely and important topic, one which, in the hands of an Arthur Krock or a David Lawrence, might well have contributed to improved public sentiment. In the hands of a teacher of literature, it consists chiefly of a rehash of the anti-McCarthy assertions of "we liberals" current in the spring of 1954. The bias of the author is established by his continuous use of such expressions as "the sort of people one doesn't know," "the dark, unknown populace . . . potential McCarthy supporters—unsusceptible to rational control."

It would be enlightening to hear some specific details of the acts that Mr. Langbaum, speaking for "at least half of us," characterizes as "our anti-Communist effort" that was "interrupted." When liberals, and especially the college-professor type, make political headlines, it is usually for signing petitions of "prominent citizens," protesting

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the invasion of the "constitutional rights" of some Rosenberg or Lattimore or Remington, or applauding some judge who has blocked their prosecution. It would be refreshing to hear of some real anti-Communist activity by these intellectuals.

Mr. Langbaum has evidently not fully recovered from a severe case of jitters brought on by his narrow escape from a threatened appearance on his campus of the dreaded Senator from Wisconsin. His "certainty" that the "McCarthy myth has collapsed" sounds very shaky, and justifiably so.

As for the present situation, Mr. Langbaum accepts at face value the Administration's assurance that "all . . . fellow travelers and remotest acquaintances . . . were now ousted from government"—some of them, unfortunately, after promotion, others protected by powerful influence from coming to trial on government charges. He thinks that "we are . . . united against communism," but that it is rather silly to be "worrying the distinction between liberal, Pink and Red."

Be assured that the average American does not worry much on that score, but holds that one political tag blends easily into the other. Your essayist does not approve of following "our moral principles to their 'logical conclusions.'" Finally, he asserts the "principle" that "no intellectual commitment whatever, can be criminal." Why, then, all the shouting about self-incrimination?

After relieving himself of some thirteen pages on "McCarthyism," Mr. Langbaum has little space left for his views on the problem he purports to discuss. Apparently, he favors a cessation of polemics, leading to "the only kind of culture that is *free*—quiet culture, the still, small voice of reason." It is very doubtful if that is a practical suggestion, in view of the intense bitterness expressed by the liberals last year.

"Our job now is to tell each other that we are not at war." Tell that, Professor, to the families of the men who are in Communist dungeons, or who are being shot down, every once in awhile, over neutralized waters or territory. Tell them that "we are in a state which may last fifty years," and see if they are as complacent as your liberal associates are about "the few Communists among us," and the survival of "our democracy and culture."

I hope THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR can soon publish a creditable, objective article on how to deal with communism at home.

HERBERT D. A. DONOVAN
Long Island, New York

Offbeat Meanings

I wish to express a small resentment at Mr. Werner Cohn's specialized definition and use of the term "proletarian" in his article on the Jehovah's Witnesses [AS: Summer, 1955]. Mr. Toynbee, perhaps, committed the distortion, but Mr. Cohn compounded it.

The taking of respected words and fitting them to the Procrustean bed of the specialist is to be deplored. I, for one, doubt whether adoption of offbeat meanings for standard terms really makes for clarity and understanding.

The content of Mr. Cohn's article was provocative, but I must confess that it grated to have to adjust to "proletarian" in the new context. It was a little like eating bacon that had been dropped in the sand.

Workers of the world, unite!

TILTON M. BARRON
Worcester, Massachusetts

Concern for Contemporaneity

I wish to take issue with Werner Cohn in his article, "Jehovah's Witnesses as a Proletarian Movement" [AS: Summer, 1955]. It seems to me that he is another victim of those sociologists whose credo is "Let us now go up into the House of Contemporaneity and worship." The language of this sect of sociologists is frequently quite as esoteric as that of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Of thousands of examples, I cite one: "monad." But aside from language, it is the concern for contemporaneity that leads so many sociologists into pitfalls. Their sights are too low. When they look backward they never, or hardly ever, get beyond Dr. Freud. Mr. Cohn

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accuses the Jehovah's Witnesses of "proletarian secession from society." What about "the Orphic way of life" among the ancient Greeks? It was the "only road to salvation" and only "the elect" could be "saved," with all others going to a hideous hell. Was this also a "proletarian secession"? Should we accuse the Orphics of "an underlying inability to come to terms with the risks and dangers inherent in life itself"? Would Mr. Cohn claim "an adolescent quality of proletarian movements" was the motif of the Book of Revelations? I was quite disturbed that Mr. Cohn did not state anywhere that the Jehovah's Witnesses paraphrase the Book of Revelations over and over again in their own literature. Even the number of the current "elect" in the world, namely 144,000, comes from this book.

As I see the problem, any interpretation of an Armageddon sect in America which leaves out references to Revelations (or, for that matter, Homer and Virgil, especially in the Sixth *Aeneid*), is shaky. Furthermore, it is even shakier business to leave out reference to what may be the single major motive of all Judgment Day sects: the *apparent fulfillment* of ancient prophecies in our day. We have reached the fire-from-heaven epoch. We are even so squarely in the middle of it that we find it difficult to define what is absurd any longer. Imagine the President of the United States meeting with his cabinet in a tent 100 miles from Washington in 1920!

In my high school days I knew many Russellites (the founders of the Jehovah's Witness religion), and I want to emphasize that they are not different from the corner grocer or the local B.P.O.E. president. After all, the son of Jehovah's Witnesses became the President of the United States on the conservative ticket (Republican) in 1952.

FRANCIS HAYES
Gainesville, Florida

A Thorough Understanding

Soon after I had read Mr. Werner Cohn's article in the Summer issue, I was "buttonholed" by a Jehovah's Witness. I felt unusually well fortified in my stand after I had read the results of his research. It seems amazing to me that such ideas as those which this group not only believes in but tries to spread could have survived in this day and age which we like to think of as "enlightened." Works such as Mr. Cohn's, which are well documented, scholarly and well presented, are needed to let educated people have a little idea of what notions are still held by such groups. Only through a thorough understanding of the situation can any constructive action be taken.

JOHN R. REEDER
New Haven, Connecticut

Recurring Millenarian Phenomena

In linking Jehovah's Witnesses with Nazi, Communist, and some Zionist youth groups as examples of a Toynbee-like proletarian movement, Werner Cohn is making a scholarly mountain out of a molehill of recurring millenarian phenomena from the first century A.D. to the twentieth.

He may well have added as examples of "curious" eschatological movements the Mormon Church and the Seventh-day Adventists as sociologically more akin to the religious sect he denominates as "proletarian," than is the Marxist-Communist society, which certainly not only "lives in," but is "of" the given societies wherever it appears. And of all such "Toynbee Proletarians" the Ku Klux Klan is or was the most perfect likeness.

Was it Mr. Cohn's purpose to use Jehovah's Witnesses as "whipping horses" in order to assure his readers that he is anti-Marxian and anti-Communist? If not, then why go so far afield to find movements analogous to his title theme?

It should not go unchallenged when a writer presents his materials as a work of research and fails to use undisputed examples of the type of organization which Mr. Cohn says is typical of totalitarianism—"onion" in form and with "charismatic leadership." Our industrial system is loaded with examples. I know a great newspaper chain empire that is commonly thought to be

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owned by one man. But New York banks are the real owners and direct the policies of the chain. I did some work for a great bank recently and was surprised to learn that this reliable institution is the hidden owner and director of several industries thought by the public to be owned by shadow personnel. And what of giant concerns found to be owned and controlled by insurance companies when one peels off the "onion" wrapped directories!

If Mr. Cohn were as well acquainted with early Christianity as he is with the modern Zionist youth groups he would know that the type of organization to which he refers as the basis of his study was typical of the early Christian Church before Rome accepted it and gave its missionary movement the military power of empire. The onion-like-hierarchical organization of its spiritual and political totalitarianism is apparent to any serious student of Church history. Rome was quick to perpetuate this phase of what of necessity the early Christians had practiced in order to survive, pending, as it was thought, the Second Coming and the millennium.

The eschatology phase of Jehovah's Witnesses is rampant in practically all Protestant groups, excepting the liberal churches. It is today a dominant theme among communicants of the burgeoning denominations outside the more formal evangelical bodies.

Another example of what Mr. Cohn thinks is typical of the totalitarianism of the Marxist-Communists and Jehovah's Witnesses is the French Revolutionists, especially the Jacobins, who had their own political commissars and secret police. Still another is the anti-slavery advocates who participated in the underground railroad system of freeing slaves. A real onion-like organization was this, indeed, with infiltrated leadership of "who's-got-the-button-type."

Applying the criteria which Mr. Cohn uses, it will be found by using scholarly research that "proletarian" totalitarianism has its roots in many institutions and in many countries of Western civilization. Isolation of this or that group from its economic, religious, or sociological environment does not provide research materials sufficient to establish Mr. Cohn's thesis or to defend it against intelligent challenge. His metaphysical concept conceals unhistorical details important in forming sound conclusions.

GIFFORD ERNEST
Chicago, Illinois

Proletarian Identification

I should like to thank Werner Cohn for reviving some very pleasant memories and for analyzing, by analogy, a movement which influenced my adolescent development. As a law student, I have long been fascinated by the Witnesses and their perseverance in the face of difficult Constitutional battles. As the mazkir for Camp Shomria of Hashomer Hatzair at the impressionable age of fifteen, I was happy to feel that I was not an outsider and could recall the meaning of the jargon. (I am surprised that "tents" rather than "ohelim" was used.)

Although my political orientation has been substantially altered (I am now a member of the New York Young Republican Club), I am convinced that this early identification with a "proletarian" movement was profitable and enlightening. The attempt to be different manifested itself in an affinity for "good" music, books and the theatre, in addition to the absence of make-up. It gave us a feeling of independence and importance without neglecting community feeling.

Within the context of adult life, I agree that the proletarian life and movement is improper in its sacrifice of responsibility and mature independent action for security in the highly developed community. Mr. Cohn's keen analysis of these groups has given me the feeling, more than ever, that my few years spent with a proletarian movement added to my ability to appreciate the "capitalist, bourgeois" community which I have now come to love.

I should like to add that the Shomer picture of the hibbutz was not unlike the New World described in Mr. Cohn's article. His analogy has many other points of similarity, but I am quite confident that

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the author is well aware of them and that they have been omitted only because of the demands of editorial brevity.

JOSHUA F. GREENBERG
Brooklyn, New York

Not So New Isolationism

Margaret Mead, in "The New Isolationism" [AS: Summer, 1955], decries as unfortunate the tendency of intellectuals (especially Hofstadter, Riesman and Glazer, and Charlotte Knight in the articles mentioned) to relegate the world crisis to last place in discussions of various domestic ills. It seems to me that this lack of emphasis on the world crisis is justified, insomuch as the country is becoming more and more isolationist, *de facto*, every day.

People seem only secondarily concerned with this world crisis. They are primarily interested in the problem of buying a new television set, or sending the kids through college, and so forth. Civil Defense authorities are deploring the lack of volunteers. The failure to take an interest in plans of evacuation of our major cities is becoming a major defense problem, as pointed out in Lewis A. Dexter's article, "Defense Means Protection," in the same issue of the SCHOLAR. Margaret Mead is certainly correct in noting this isolationist tendency and voicing a warning in respect to it. But would she have our social scientists present the world crisis as a primary cause of certain domestic ills when this is plainly not the case? It seems to me that psychology, class analyses, and attention to cultural character, the very methods which Margaret Mead denounces as a "subtle, new, reactive form of isolationism," are the most accurate forms of analysis that can be applied at this time, considering the present isolationist temper of the culture.

Furthermore, I cannot see why Margaret Mead includes the adjective "new" in her title. This isolationism is nothing new, but an extension of the same old isolationism so typical of America and broken only by brief periods of involvement in foreign wars. I am not saying that this is a good thing, but we cannot ignore its existence; and I do feel that individual personalities and class character are more significant in influencing American institutions today than is the world crisis or fears allegedly engendered by it.

EDWARD JAY
Browning, Montana

Education and TV

I want to express my sincere appreciation of Joseph Wood Krutch's column, "If You Don't Mind My Saying So . . ." on education and TV. It seems to me to get to the core of several things that need to be borne in mind by anyone who has to do some thinking about education, especially liberal arts education.

It strikes me that it might be worth while to make reprints of this column available in quantity. In any event, I hope that in some way it will be given wide distribution among educators.

OSCAR J. FALNES
New York, New York

Neo-Phariseeism

Some of your readers appear to be affronted by Mr. Prezzolini's "Testament," published in your Spring issue. They sniff poison in the jeremiad of a lovable and scholarly gentleman who in the declining years of his life finds cause for much disillusionment, only slightly assuaged by the realization that he is not above shining his own shoes and washing his own windows.

To spot alarming trends of neo-this or neo-that in Mr. Prezzolini's cultured and civilized regret over what might have been but has not been, strikes this reader as a singular form of neo-phariseeism.

Despite his disillusionment, it is clear that Mr. Prezzolini has found a modicum of peace and contentment. Whether in these days of A and H-bombs cheerful whistling through the conventional corridors of optimism can vouchsafe as much, is open to considerable doubt.

GARIBALDI LAGUARDIA
Santurce, Puerto Rico

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Despair and Exhaustion

I found myself wrestling with Prezzolini ["Testament," AS: Spring, 1955] like Jacob with the angel. He is a distinguished man, a remarkable mind. He has explored the widest fields of knowledge and experience all to no purpose. One cannot argue with him for what has happened. The trouble is not that he is wrong. What is devastating is to see so great a mind sink down into despair. He has lost his love of life and of his fellowmen. Santayana in his last writings showed a cold indifference to all earthly things. But Santayana was consistently that kind of a personality from the first, an intellectual never interested in action or other human beings. Prezzolini was never a mere intellectual spectator using the football field for his mind to play around in, indifferent to everything but the sport of using his mind. Santayana ended in cold indifference as he had lived. Prezzolini has plunged into life, has loved life, has felt the immense hopes and illusions of 1900, and now reaches the end in sadness and despair.

In his pessimism he chooses to think of the world of eternal conflict as being all a one-sided affair of triumphant evil. When one thinks of the results of the tireless efforts of such men as he in our past half century to diminish hatreds, misunderstandings, and destruction around them; when one looks at our world, as far as anyone can grasp such a vast scene, who can say that Prezzolini is not justified? Yet when such immeasurable forces are in conflict no human mind is massive enough to speak with confidence.

It is a grievous spectacle to see such gifts as Prezzolini has possessed end in utter despair and exhaustion. But it is well that he has spoken, even though few may listen. In America where such loud complacent voices are now raised in a triumphant chorus of faith that the present American way of life is supreme perfection, Prezzolini should remind us that all is not best in the best of all possible Americas.

STEPHEN BUSH
Iowa City, Iowa

Pseudo-Conservative Revolt

My wife and I find Dr. Hofstadter's article, "The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt" [AS: Winter, 1954-55], to be the most illuminating discussion which we have read about the forces that are bringing confusion and anxiety into our present American life. We would like to pass it on to friends who are as concerned as we are about getting to the roots of our trouble.

HARRY A. OVERSTREET
Mill Valley, California

* * *

Splendid is the word for Richard Hofstadter's article. To such a thinker thousands can be truly grateful, because of the stimulating and convincing thesis he sets forth. Seldom have we seen an issue defined as clearly and wrapped up as well.

JOHN CHARLES WYNN
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

A Pastiche for T.S.E.

In "For T.S.E. Only" [AS: Spring, 1955], Mr. Hyam Plutzik has written a clever pastiche but one which, regrettably, draws some of its sustenance from myth, especially in its attempt to exploit the weary old issue of anti-Semitism. Words "will not stay in place,/ Will not stay still. Shrieking voices/ Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering,/ Always assail them. . . ." And it is frightening to reflect on the implications that have been drawn from one line in "Gerontion" and the general atmosphere (presumably) of "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar," both written circa 1920. Heaven help us if the Irish should decide to protest the anti-Irish sentiment of the Sweeney poems.

As for the lack of fellow-feeling, the warmth, the human touch, or whatever—this, too, is an old story, representative of certain opinions which were in vogue about 1932 when it was fashionable to predict, not without malice, how quickly T.S.E. would be forgotten, a miserable, disintegrating, reactionary talent, all intellect and no heart.

DAVID W. EVANS
South Gate, California

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